

Understanding Partition Politics, Memories, Experiences

NCERT TEXTBOOK QUESTIONS SOLVED

1. What did the Muslim League demand through its resolution of 1940?

Ans. An important resolution was passed by the Muslim League on 23rd March, 1940. This resolution was drafted by Sikandar Hayat Khan, the leader of the Unionist Party and the Punjab Premier. Through this, the Muslim League demanded an autonomy for the Muslim -majority areas of the subcontinent. But in the resolution there was no mention either of the partition of the country or the creation of Pakistan.

Sikandar Hayat Khan was opposed to the idea of the formation of Pakistan. He opined of a loose federation with a lot of autonomy for the states.

2. Why did some people think of Partition as a very sudden development ?

Ans. Some people think that partition of India in 1947 was a sudden development. Many Muslim leaders were not serious in their demand for Pakistan as a separate nation. On many occasions, Jinnah used the idea of Pakistan to seek favours from the British and to block concessions into the Congress. Even the Muslims were confused about the idea of Pakistan. They could not think of their future in an independent country called Pakistan. Many people had migrated to the new country with the hope that they would soon come back to India as soon as the situation improved. In fact, the partition was so sudden that nobody could imagine it.

3. How did ordinary people view Partition?(or)

Describe the harrowing experiences of ordinary people during the period of partition of India.

Ans. For ordinary people, partition was full of challenges and brought sufferings. The division was not a territorial division for them. It was also not a party politics of Congress and the Muslim League for them. But for the ordinary people, partition was a challenge for them. It brought misery and troubles to them.

It meant death of their loved one, loss of property and wealth. Partition also uprooted them from their paternal land. People were forced to live in refugee camps. They were also forced to start their life once again from a new platform. So for ordinary people, partition was not a pleasant experience, but it was painful and full of sufferings.

4. What were Mahatma Gandhi's arguments against Partition?

Ans. Mahatma Gandhi was in favour of unity among various communities of the country. He was a firm supporter of religious harmony. He never supported the idea of partition. He did not want the separation of the Muslims from the Hindus who had been living together for centuries.

In his view partition was wrong. He was ready to sacrifice his life for an undivided India. But he was not ready to accept the partition. In his view, Islam stood for unity and brotherhood of mankind and not for separation. So he said that the demand of Pakistan by the Muslim League was un-Islamic and sinful. In his view those who favoured the partition were enemies of both Islam and India. He opined the Hindu and the Muslims belonged to the same land. They were living in India together for centuries. They shared the same land, same food. They drank the same water. They speak the same language and they live in peace and harmony: So he appealed to the Muslim League not to demand for a separate nation.

5. Why is Partition viewed as an extremely significant marker in South Asian history ?

Ans. The following reasons can be put forward for the given view:

- The partition of India had a unique nature. This partition was based on religions. The partition took place in the name of the communities. History has never witnessed such type of partition.
- The partition marked a severe violence. Innumerable people were killed. People began to kill each other irrespective of their earlier relation. Earlier they lived with each other in harmony and peace but now started to kill each other. Government machinery failed to check this.
- People faced a lot of problems. Their life became miserable. Their near and dear ones were killed. Many people were abducted.
- People moved across the border. Most of the Muslims of India crossed over to Pakistan and almost all Hindus and Sikhs came to India from Pakistan. They were forced to start their life afresh.
- People lost all their movable and immovable property all of a sudden. They became homeless and forced to live in refugee camps.

6. Why was British India partitioned ?

Ans. Several factors can be attributed for the partition of British India. Some of them are discussed below:

Role of Communal Parties and Organisations: Several historians and scholars think that the main purpose of the foundation of the Muslim League was to serve the interests of the Muslims. In retaliation, the Hindu Mahasabha was founded. The Muslim League was demanding more and more political rights for the Muslims. In retaliation of this, some of the Hindus took steps and established the Hindu Mahasabha in the year 1915. The Hindu Mahasabha also demanded more political rights and representation of the Hindus in the different government organizations. Following in the footsteps, the Sikh League was founded. Akali Dal also put forward demand for their people. Directly or indirectly, these political parties helped separation. They created feeling of separation and isolation among different communities.

British Policy: In India, the British followed the policy of Divide and Rule. In India, before the arrival of the British, the Hindus and the Muslims lived happily. There was unity, mutual cooperation and brotherhood among them. But the British did not like this. They sowed the seeds of dissension and followed the policy of Divide and Rule. Most of the historians believe that this policy of Divide and Rule was the main reason of the partition.

The British historians, journalists and writers propagated through their writings that Muslim invaders made the Hindus enslaved and they had been exploited for centuries.

Role of British Government: The British Government also encouraged partition. The British Government encouraged the Muslim League to demand for a separate state. They tried to disrupt the movement of independence by playing the game of imperialism.

Role of Leaders: Role of leaders was also responsible for the partition. Under the leadership of Jinnah, the Muslim League moved a resolution at Lahore demanding a measure of autonomy for the Muslim majority area and after that a new nation called Pakistan. The great poet Mohammad Iqbal also spoke about the need for a Muslim state in north west India as early as in 1930.

7. How did women experience Partition?

Ans. For women, partition was horrible. Women were raped, abducted and many times forced to live with strangers and start a new life. They were deeply traumatised and began to develop new family bonds in the changed circumstances.

Women became victims on both the sides of the border. They were forced to live in a strange circumstances. But the government officials of both the countries did not take any serious step to consult those women. Women were left on their fate.

They were even murdered by their own family members. When the men realized that the women of

their family would fall into the hands of the enemy, they killed their women with their own hands. To escape from the hands of enemy, in a Sikh village, ninety women were said to have voluntarily jumped into a well.

8. How did the Congress come to change its view on Partition?

Ans. Initially the Indian National Congress was not in favour of the partition. But in March, 1947, the Congress high command agreed to Punjab into two parts. One part would consist of the Muslim - majority areas and the other part would consist of the areas having Hindu-Sikh majority. To most of the Sikh leaders and Congress leaders, partition of Punjab was a necessary evil. The Sikhs feared that their denial to the partition of Punjab may lead them to be overpowered by the Muslims. They would be under control of the Muslims. Situation was the same in Bengal. The Bhadrakalok Bengali Hindus of Bengal wanted to retain political power with them. They were also apprehensive of the Muslims. In Bengal, the Hindus were in minority. So they favoured the partition. They thought that partition would help them to retain political dominance. These reasons forced the Congress to change their view on Partition.

9. Examine the strengths and limitations of oral history. How have oral-history techniques furthered our understanding of Partition?

Ans. Oral history techniques help historians to write experiences of people during the time of partition. In fact, history of partition has been reconstructed with the help of oral narratives. It is not possible to extract such kind of information from government records. Government would not provide such information which paint them in bad colour. It will also not tell about the daily development of the events during the partition. Moreover, Government was involved in negotiation. Documents of government deal with policy matters and throw light on efforts of major political parties.

But the oral history tells the day to day account. It is told by the people who have actually gone through the trauma and pains of the partition. But the oral data is not free from limitations. Oral data lacks concrete details. It does not have the chronological order. Oral accounts are concerned with tangential issues and that small individual experiences are irrelevant to the unfolding of the larger canvas of history. In oral history people may not talk their personal aspects. They can hide even their fault or fault of their community as a whole. Many people may not remember all events. People tend to forget also. Accuracy of narration can also be questioned.