



Manan Morshed, from the series *Leftover Stories*, 2016.

But why were the British so resolute to keep India under their thumb? Britain's imperial history is replete with corrupt politicians and businessmen but even most liberals like Macaulay, those supporting the Whigs against the conservative Tories, would also denigrate India's culture and tradition. For them, too, India was a fertile ground for quick bucks. Rajani Palme Dutt (1896-1974) in his book *India Today* quoted an 1833 letter by Thomas Babington Macaulay to his sister, written before his arrival in India, in which Macaulay expressed his frustration that in his writing career he could never earn more than GBP 200 a year, although he needed to earn at least GBP 500 to fulfil his needs. The Indian job offer came as a great relief, with an annual salary package of GBP 10,000. He also said that he had learnt from people maintaining high social

standards in Calcutta that he could save at least GBP 5,000 each year even after covering the cost of a luxurious lifestyle, meaning he would have a saving of GBP 30,000 in cash after the end of his tenure in India. Nothing could be more gratifying for him, he concluded.

The British couldn't use the Congress the way they wanted to. Soon after its formation, there were whispers of dissent. During Robert Bulwer-Lytton's tenure as Viceroy of India, a number of regressive laws were put into effect, including the Dramatic Performances Act (1876), Vernacular Press Act (1878) and Indian Arms Act (1878). Demands were raised from Congress sessions to repeal these laws. Irritated by its activities, Lord Curzon, who was appointed Viceroy of India in 1899, said that Congress had probably lost its way. So one of his noble ambitions, he said, was

to 'help Congress have a peaceful death.' The Partition of Bengal was orchestrated in part to discredit Congress.

Bengal's Partition, however, was met with stiff resistance. Lord Minto, who succeeded Curzon in 1905, also sought to erode Congress' power but his strategy was different from Curzon's, and quite novel at that. Instead of breaking Congress from within, he thought it would be more effective to put it up against a rival political party, leading to the creation of the All-India Muslim League with the help of Muslim leaders. If Congress was established to cut off the middle class from the common people, Muslim League was created to further widen that division. It also served to inflame and institutionalise the hitherto latent communal tension between the Hindus and the Muslims.

To supplement the creation of Muslim League, separate electoral systems were adopted for the Muslim and Hindu voters. Of course, the right to vote was limited. During the very crucial elections of 1937, only four crore people were enfranchised even though a total of 35 crore could join the electoral roll. It could be said that the

stage for India's Partition was being set with the creation of two separate parties along religious lines and two separate electoral systems for the people of the Hindu and Islamic faiths. What once promised to be a large-scale nationalist movement slowly turned into a communal standoff used to the advantage of a few politicians. The politicians played this communalism card for their own benefit and their manoeuvres succeeded, though at a dreadful cost.

On the face of it, the Partition of India was a war fought between Hindus and Muslims but it was the British who had masterminded it, partly in revenge for their cataclysmic failure to separate Bengal. Hindu community leaders should also share part of the blame because of their communal role during their resistance movement against the 1905 Partition of Bengal, which served to sow the first seeds of communal politics in India and eventually led to the breaking apart of a once-glorious nation.

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Translated from Bangla by Badiuzzaman Bay.

Excerpt from the original Bengali, titled Deshbhanga Totporota o Dayitto.

RESTORYING PARTITION



Akhilananda Dutta

Currently Residing: Kolkata, West Bengal, India

Age in 1947: Not available

Migrated from: Dhaka, Bangladesh

Migrated to: Kolkata, West Bengal, India

Akhilananda Dutta comes from a family of doctors. Born in Dhaka in 1942 to a doctor and a housewife, he recalls that most of their family members were doctors at that time.

He remembers that his older brother was involved in the struggles around the time of independence and that it was not uncommon for some people to even carry swords for

protection. Independence Day in August 1947 was celebrated by the family.

Mr Dutta began his schooling at St. Gregory School, where he studied up to class two, before the family left for Kolkata in 1950 due to an illness of his mother. Mr Dutta recalls that during the journey they first took a car to Sadarghat in Dhaka, where they boarded a steamboat. They later continued with a train to Sealdah Station in Kolkata, from where they went by bus to the Chetla District, where they settled for the next five years. His father worked as a doctor at the medical college in Kolkata. Sadly, his mother passed away within a few days after their arrival. Mr Dutta was admitted to class four at Kailash Vidyamandir. Later, the family moved to Dum Dum.

In the 1970s the area where Mr Dutta lived saw tumultuous times due to the Naxalite Movement. Mr Dutta got caught in it and once suffered severe injuries of broken fingers, a broken leg and a damaged ear. Today he enjoys his life and is proud of his two daughters.

Interviewer: Ritriban Chakraborty

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