Modern History · GS - I

Evaluate the policies of Lord Curzon and their long term implications on the national movements.

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
2020	GS - I	Modern History

MARKS	WORD LIMIT
10	~150 words

Answer Hint

Administrative centralisation; Partition of Bengal; educational and university reforms; economic and archaeological policies; nationalist opposition; Swadeshi movement; long-term political consequences

Model Answer

Introduction

Lord Curzon, Viceroy of India from 1899 to 1905, pursued administrative efficiency and imperial consolidation. However, several of his policies intensified Indian political dissatisfaction and strengthened nationalism.

Major policies and their implications

- **Partition of Bengal (1905):** Officially justified on administrative grounds, it was widely perceived as an attempt to divide Bengali political consciousness along communal and regional lines. It triggered the Swadeshi and boycott movements.
- **University reforms:** The Indian Universities Act, 1904, increased government control over universities. Nationalists viewed it as an attempt to restrict intellectual and political freedom.
- **Official Secrets and administrative control:** Curzon's emphasis on bureaucratic authority and opposition to Indian participation reinforced perceptions of racial discrimination.
- **Calcutta Corporation reforms:** Changes reduced elected Indian representation, strengthening criticism of colonial centralisation.
- **Economic and military policies:** His approach to frontier administration and imperial expenditure generated debate about whose interests colonial governance served.

- **Archaeological conservation:** The Ancient Monuments Preservation Act, 1904, strengthened monument protection, illustrating that some policies had lasting institutional benefits.

Long-term implications

Curzon's policies widened the gap between colonial rulers and educated Indians. The Swadeshi movement encouraged indigenous enterprise, national education, mass mobilisation and more assertive political methods. The partition also contributed to ideological divisions within the Congress between moderates and extremists.

Conclusion

Although Curzon sought to consolidate imperial rule, his policies unintentionally accelerated Indian nationalism by exposing the limits of colonial reform and encouraging organised resistance.

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