

## Partition of India: A Humanitarian Crisis or Political Strategy?

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### Abstract

*The Partition of India in 1947 is one of the most traumatic events in modern history; it marked the end of British colonialism and the beginning of two independent countries, India and Pakistan. While the actual Partition may have been an unavoidable compromise for the Indian National Congress and the Muslim League, as they were experiencing intense differences and tensions, the reality of Partition went far beyond politics. This thesis will assess the various understandings of the causes of Partition. It is concerned with the colonial practices and policies of the British; the political conversations that did not lead to any understanding; and some areas of colonial and postcolonial communal tensions. The argument not only reveals how the hurried departure of the British coupled with no planning and administrative failure led to violence of extraordinary proportions at the time, forced migration, and irreversible harm to human lives, it illustrates how the mass displacement of nearly 15 million people along with the horrendous communal riots and losses to the people and the countries made Partition one of the largest human catastrophes of the 20th century. The effects of Partition continue to be felt, and the consequences can be observed in Indian-Pakistani relations, refugees' narratives, and public memory for generations since. By interrogating the dynamic interplay between political motivations and human costs, this thesis will contend that although the Partition of India was politically, an otherwise politically contrived construct, it must be primarily understood as a humanitarian catastrophe, along with ongoing and profound social, emotional, and geo-political impacts.*

**Keywords:** Partition, Communalism, Displacement, British Raj, Congress, Muslim League, Refugee Crisis, Nationalism.

The Partition of India occurred in 1947. It remains one of the most tragic and complicated moments of history in a modern South Asia. It signified the end of almost two hundred years of British rule and the emergence of two sovereign states - India and Pakistan - in the midst of unprecedented violence, mass movement of people, and anti-communal violence. The Partition was not simply a political changing of the guard; it was a civilizational breach which tore families apart, divided communities, and marked millions of individuals with lasting emotional and psychological scars. When the Indian sub-continent was about to step out of colonialism to take independence, the hope of freedom was drowned out by the gigantic humanitarian disaster surrounding it. Millions were displaced overnight and estimates of one to two million deaths during the collective riots and forced population movements were recorded. The horror of Partition raises a very important and contentious question: Was the division of India the only or natural ending to a trajectory of

communal division? Was it a political tactic that was carried out under time constraints and irresponsibly to the benefit of rogue interested parties? Any hope for a nuanced understanding of what happened during this event requires examination and understanding of a variety of historical, political, religious, and social forces that were working sedimented accumulatively onto each other over decades. The roots of communal discord in India can be traced back to the policies of the British colonial administration which purposely inflamed religions and communities, to make British rule less hazardous (hence the policy of divide and rule). What became the modern form of communalism was aggravated by the British practice of institutionalizing distinct, communal identities, providing separate electorates to Muslims in the Morley-Minto Reforms of 1909, and promoting separate political agendas, such as the Indian National Congress and All-India Muslim League. European (or alien) political ideologies confused and complicated homegrown and historically existent religious and national sentiments. Whereas the Congress put forward to claim to represent all Indians (including Muslims), in practice, many Muslims felt alienated and marginalized within the emerging definition of an Indian nation—ultimately evident from the need of some Muslims eventually to seek the recognition of the Muslim League's agenda for a nation separate from India. While the Lahore Resolution of 1940 was an extreme moment (in the sense of a proposed demand to identify new form of nation, a conceived Pakistan), and appeared to be justified as a solution based on the preservation of religious and cultural identity, the issue remained...was Pakistan the only solution? Could there have been other serious considerations of alternative frameworks, such as a continuation in colonial spirit with a federal arrangement giving recognition to provinces and semi-autonomous units? Was the inability to reach a consensus due to intractable political positions or was the intent of some leaders to build a nation based on religious exclusivity? And in this resonates the crux of the matter - what was the Partition: Was it an accounting of a long-standing humanitarian crisis in communal alienation, or an act of political strategy manifested through leaders' aspirations and the colonial backdrop of British expediency? There is no simple or straightforward answer to the latter. The Partition was a culmination of the interplay between political negotiation, communal narratives, rationalities, and colonial machinations. One cannot easily overlook the role that the British had in hastening the subcontinent's division. Following the end of World War II, Britain's economic dilemma in the face of waning global power pushed it towards a premature exit from India. The appointment of Louis Mountbatten as the last Viceroy, with the hastily drawn-up plan to instigate the

Independence of India by rendering a date of disengagement to August 15, 1947, provided such little room for a plan for a peaceful disengagement. The guessing of both time required and transition processes for boundary demarcation, hurriedly entrusted to an uninterested and unseasoned Sir Cyril Radcliffe, there should be no understatement to the pace of the boundary demarcation process or its secretiveness. The Radcliffe Line, known for slicing Punjab and Bengal in half, was drawn across villages, rivers, and communities with no really solid rationale or public discussion. The imposition of the arbitrary lines incited one of the largest, but also one of the most horrendous, mass migrations ever witnessed, the lines moving Hindus and Sikhs into India, and Muslims toward Pakistan. The assaults, abduction of women and children, mass murders, and looting perpetrated by mobs, militias, and revenge attack groups did not take place because there were allegedly "Rent-A-Mob" action groups operating, it occurred because there was no adequate administrative arrangements, nor security arrangements in place for the confused populations in the midst of these fresh boundaries. The sheer scale of violence and displacement and the timeframes of the forced migration meant that the Partition represented more than a political movement underpinning borders or countries; it represented a large-scale humanitarian catastrophe. The violence and displacement was unlike anything ever experienced elsewhere in the world. The rail cars of refugees were on their way to become "moving morgues"; complete villages were levelled; women were held hostage, raped and almost always murdered; neighbours became enemies due to the fuelled frenzy of hatred provoked by unverified reports, lies and deceit; the survivors were manipulated by animosity disguised as news stories. And all of this led to human psychologies, the long-lasting trauma, suffered by the survivors – most of whom remain silent about their experiences - reverberating through the generations. Those camps that did exist for refugees were filled, filthy, poorly maintained; to where the governments involved on either side of the desire for rehabilitating the displaced were only partly successful with much of their success proving to be unsuccessful, not to mention the permanent loss of homes, property, and identities. The consequences of this human tragedy extended beyond physical harm to encompass emotional and cultural harm. The trauma from Partition is still apparent in literature and art, cinema and oral histories across South Asia. Certain scholars argue that there was an inevitability to Partition for strategic reasons, while also recognizing the cost of human suffering. They cite the deep-seated communal divisions, the failure of the Cabinet Mission Plan, and the unwillingness of the political actors to compromise where there were indications that a united India was no longer

possible. For leaders such as Muhammad Ali Jinnha, the demand for Pakistan was about more than just politics; it was about survival. Still, there are also compelling arguments that Partition was about political manoeuvring for leaders to achieve their aims. Jinnah's insistence on the two-nation theory, Nehru's centralized vision of post-colonial India, and Mountbatten's regime of artificial time were all seen to represent the prioritization of political power over people. One historian even argues that the British understood what was "best" for them in terms of regional foreign affairs. The legacy of Partition persists in the social and political realities of nation-states of South Asia particularly in India and Pakistan and its long-running hostile relations, including indecision in the fallout over Kashmir. Communal tensions continue to rise in India and Pakistan (often linked to narratives around unresolved Partition issues). For Transnational communities, the pain of forced relocation and longing for lost homelands remains. For Transnationals, notion of partition can be framed around identity, nationalisms, or even geopolitical relationships which shift each decade, day, and minute. In essence, Partition was an "event" without an endpoint; it reconfigured identities, nationalisms, and geopolitical relations. The aim of the research paper is to explore Partition of India and Pakistan as an "event." Next: to review the study of Partition as a contested phenomenon - as both a massive humanitarian crisis, and as an intentional, politically-driven strategy. Our study aims to critically examined if the causes of partition, the communal tensions that surrounded it, the roles of colonial and Indian leaders, and ever-present history continues to plague displaced populations today. Primary and secondary sources will be reviewed, such as archival resources, testimony, literature, art, et al. The goal is not to blame any one actor, but rather to provide a nuanced and balanced portrayal of an event that still resonates in the psyches and politics of South Asia. In closing, the Partition of India was a tragedy of human suffering while also serving as a complicated political transaction. Its legacy is not straightforward and requires a multidisciplinary and empathetic approach. As we reckon with this painful history, we must wrestle with the question: could this disaster have been avoided? Or was it just the unfortunate price of decolonization and competing nationalisms? This research paper seeks to engage the reader with these important questions and contribute to the continuing discussion of Partition as both a humanitarian crisis and a political strategy.

### **Literature Review**

The Partition of India in 1947 has produced an enormous amount of literature that gives a variety of interpretations from nationalist, revisionist, subaltern, and feminist views. The variety of

literature reflects the complexities of Partition - not simply a political event, but a tragic experience for human beings. Bipan Chandra, in *India's Struggle for Independence* (1989), provides a nationalist perspective on the failure of the anti-colonial struggle, and the failure to maintain unity. He argues that the British colonial "divide and rule" policy deliberately created and encouraged religious splits which ultimately led to the Partition. Chandra puts considerable blame on colonial mismanagement and the communal politics of both the Muslim League and some elements of the Hindu Mahasabha. Yasmin Khan offers a revisionist approach with her important book *The Great Partition* (2007) that challenges political narratives. She critiques having an under-resourced government in a hurry to leave a colonized territory with poor planning and no administrative discretion, that makes Partition into a disaster. Khan demonstrates that human displacement at a mass scale, communal violence, and the role of panic and rumors, to be the important parts of the violence that can occur, and the chaos of things beyond high-level political actions. Urvashi Butalia looks chiefly from a feminist and subaltern perspective, in her book *The Other Side of Silence* (1998) and she highlights the erased narratives about women, and marginalized group experience. Butalia highlights how, through oral histories and individual testimonies, during Partition physical dislocation was not the only thing that happened, also emotional and psychological trauma ensued in which especially women suffered through abduction, rape, and conversions. Butalia has shed light on personal sufferings which have been disregarded in political contexts. Ayesha Jalal publishes *The Sole Spokesman* (1985), which deals with the politics of Partition in terms of Muhammad Ali Jinnah's ambivalence. Jalal takes a critical view when she portrays Jinnah's idea of Pakistan was not so much a demand as an ideological bargaining chip to alter the political calculus of participation; consequently, Partition was a failure of political judgement rather an end deduced from excessive political agency. Even though these perspectives are different, there is a major absence in the scholarship. There is a great deal of work done on the political and ideological aspects of Partition and on the gendered aspects which is particularly important, however, the humanitarian crisis entailing mass displacement, intergenerational trauma, and refugee resettlement, remains secondary. In much of the scholarship there are almost no works which foreground the humanitarian tragedy as the crux of the discussion. The intent of this study is to begin to fill that gap by placing an emphasis on humanitarian suffering due to Partition, and to marry political critique with the lived experience of dislocations, in hopes of achieving a more complete understanding of one of the most consequential events in South Asian history.

## **Objectives of the Study**

The goal of this study is to explore if the Partition of India was a politically planned move or simply a humanitarian catastrophe—or some combination of the two. To do this research has focused on three key areas which help unravel the multiple dimensions of Partition. First, this research looks at some of the political negotiations and miscalculations that contributed to the disintegration of British India. This area deals with pivotal moments of history (Cabinet Mission Plan [1946], Mountbatten Plan [1947], and the aborted Congress-League dialogues) and it reviews the involvement of leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru, Mahatma Gandhi, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, and Lord Mountbatten to unearth how political aspirations, errors in judgment, and assorted ideological rigidities made Partition into an almost inevitable occurrence (Jalal, 1985; Chandra, 1989). Second, the study explores some of the communal tensions and failures of governance that accelerated violence before, and during, the transitional period. The hurried or poorly planned British disengagement, the lack of effective law enforcement, and the uncoordinated response to outbreaks of violence in places such as Punjab and Bengal resulted in unprecedented massacre, arson, and rape. This research seeks to explore how both colonial administrators and local leadership failed to protect non-combatants, and, thereby contributed to the human catastrophe (Khan. 2007). Thirdly, the aim of the research is to explore patterns of displacement and trauma as enduring consequences of Partition. The dislocation of about 15 million citizens makes this the largest forced migration in modern history. To emphasize the terrible toll involving vulnerable groups such as women, children, and sectioned off marginalized communities, oral histories and personal narratives – especially those accounted for by Butalia (1998) – inform this part of the project. These shameful accounts and testimonies demonstrated how people lost their homes and families, but also their lifeways, cultural identity, security, emotional judgements, etc. The ramifications of Partition extend well beyond the political division and continues to manifest in residential and refugee colonies today. For example, beneath the hatred amongst communities and border hostilities surface legacies that injure the lives of families - different families that never met nor had anything to do with this historical injustice and yet they all suffer from the traumatic loss of a bygone community. So projecting the demolished dignity and humanity's ability to be so inhuman can be a valuable objective to identify. The overall mix of objectives provide the raw data layer of a nuanced perspective of Partition by juxtaposing the political history against the humanitarian in order to highlight both sides of the same story. The contemplated research will

return to the grand decisions made by incredible leaders to deny large numbers of citizens their most basic humanity but to add voices of the people dislocated and displaced by those efforts and gently provide an empathetic account of arguably the saddest but normal episode to one of the saddest chapters of modern history of the subcontinent.

### Methodology

This study uses qualitative-historical research, which is best for studying complex historical phenomena like the Partition of India. Qualitative research allows researchers to focus on political developments, communal discomforts, and humanitarian effects of the Partition using analytical and interpretative lenses rather than numerical lenses. The historical method is always powerful for reconstructing events, understanding the reasoning of political actors, and understanding how individuals experience events.

1. Research Design- I base the eventual design of this study on three primary axes: political bargaining and political strategies leading to the Partition, the initiation of communal violence, and the long-standing history of displacement and trauma. I refer to a period of chronology to show the pathways of events flowing from the late colonial period to the ancillary violence and aftermath of Partition. I use a chronology also as a way of situating the big picture landscape of developments and mistaken policies and administration that led to the humanitarian crisis.

2. Data Sources- The study uses secondary material, including books, archives, correspondence, articles, public documents, and other journals. Key texts used include:

- **Bipan Chandra's** *India's Struggle for Independence* (1989), which offers insight into colonial policies and nationalist movements;
- **Yasmin Khan's** *The Great Partition* (2007), which provides an analysis of the administrative collapse and ensuing chaos;
- **Ayesha Jalal's** *The Sole Spokesman* (1985), which critically examines the political negotiations between the Congress, the Muslim League, and the British;
- **Urvashi Butalia's** *The Other Side of Silence* (1998), which documents oral histories and the psychological scars of Partition, especially among women.
- These texts are the starting points for examining the relationship between political maneuvering and humanitarian suffering. Archival materials will also contribute to the historicizing and evidentiary aspects of this project, both from the records of the British colonial administration,

Cabinet Mission documents, communications from Mountbatten, and refugee cases from both Indian and Pakistani government sources.

3. Oral Histories & Refugee Testimonies- To create the humanitarian aspect of Partition, this study draws on oral histories and refugee narratives that tell lived experiences about trauma, displacement, and survival. Most of this raw data has been compiled already by others, namely Butalia (1998), Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin (Borders & Boundaries, 1998), and the 1947 Partition Archive project. The narratives provide context and, more importantly, in humanizing the numbers reflect the silences surrounding the experiences of everyday people, particularly women and other marginalized communities. Wherever possible, interviews and memoirs are subjected to narrative analysis, as they bring richness to the study of how memory, identity, and trauma are expressed through their stories. This analysis tends to identify forms of suffering evidenced in the intertwined experiences of people that are not commonly reflected in official histories, namely psychological violence, loss of honour, and transgenerational trauma..

4. Data Analysis and Ethical Issues - Analysis is underpinned by thematic content analysis looking for recurring themes such as political miscalculation, communal hatred, trauma of refugees, and policy failure. The researcher adopts a critical lens to dissect preconceived perceptions and biases within the sources while respecting the authenticity of individual narratives. This study is concerned with a sensitive undertaking around historical trauma, so I identify ethical issues to consider. Even though the research is not reliant on in-person interviews, I approach survivor testimonies and oral histories with respect and empathy while ensuring survivors' experiences of Partition remain dignified.

5. Limitations - While the methodology on its own is an innovative way of looking at lived experiences, the limitations should be noted. For instance, by relying on secondary sources I may miss the opportunity to acquire censored or less documented voices. While oral histories can be rich, they also are susceptible to memory distorting over time. Nonetheless, these limitations will be acknowledged and addressed through triangulation and critical analysis.

### **Discussion and Analysis**

A. The inordinate causes for the Partition - The Partition of India in 1947 was not an incident, it was an outcome of ingrained political, religious, and colonial factors. The British in India had a "divide and rule" policy that allowed it to govern billions of people and with each success the British intensified the divide. The British colonial administration forced communities apart



and furthermore fostered fears that each community had about each other. The British built certain identities and recognized them through debate and law (Chandra, 1989) which constructively organized the rise of religious nationalism as stated by organizations such as the Hindu Mahasabha and the Muslim League who rejected the inclusive national identity of the Indian National Congress. This was exacerbated by the emergence of Jawaharlal Nehru who embraced a centralized secular democracy vs. Muhammad Ali Jinnah seeking a separate Muslim state due to Jinnah's fears of a Hindu India that would suppress Muslim influence (Jalal, 1985). The collapse of the Cabinet Mission Plan which sought to maintain a unitary state by fettering a federal constitution marked the end of the last remaining attempts at unity by the British, Congress and Muslim politicians all of whom had considerable power to prevent partition.

- B. Communal Tensions and Violence- The political deadlock soon descended into widespread violence. When the Muslim League called for a Direct Action Day in August 1946, true calamity struck. Horrific riots broke out in Calcutta, resulting in thousands of deaths (Khan, 2007). Religious propaganda spread by local leaders, newspapers and pamphlets developed hatred and fear within communities. These riots laid to communal violence that accelerated in places such as Punjab and Bengal where the administration collapsed and civil violence evolved into pogroms. The timeline for British withdrawal was announced with little preparation with the timeline acknowledged, miscommunication about British authority led to chaos. On the 15 August 1947, the announcement of Independence left little time for peaceful transition of power, government, policing, and resettlement, creating a vacuum that unleashed violence and chaos (Butalia, 1998).
- C. Displacement as a Humanitarian Catastrophe- The most devastating facet of Partition was the dislocation (and its consequences on individuals) of roughly 10 to 15 million people who were displaced and made to cross newly drawn borders, along with unfathomable violence. Women were particularly singled out for violence: they were raped, abducted, and killed by their own families - often in the name of 'honour' (Menon & Bhasin, 1998). Refugee camps, unhygienic, overpopulated, and filled with sickness and malnutrition, were places for the displaced. Ultimately, survivors were left with lasting psychological scars resulting from their exposure to the violence, dislocation, and loss. Vignettes like the massacre on Amritsar–Lahore refugee

trains, the Noakhali riots, or the effects of the Bengal famine illustrate the vastness of human suffering (Butalia, 1998).

- D. Political strategy or colonial abandonment? The question of whether Partition was part of Britain's political strategy or abdication of responsibility remains open to debate. It is clear, however, that many scholars have argued that Britain was tired at the end of World War II, and they wanted to 'let go' of India as soon as possible. The problem was that the hastily undertaken steps were bound to lead to outcomes that were going to negatively affect millions of people, and so the country should at least have guaranteed safeguards for a responsible process; it is also true that Lord Mountbatten made pretty much every decision in haste. For example, escalating the withdrawal date, and handing off all the demarcation to Cyril Radcliffe, a lawyer who had never visited India in his life. It only took Cyril Radcliffe five weeks to allegedly draw the radial lines which divide the communal boundaries, and through all the haste of the demarcation, whole villages, families, and water systems were cut in half. It was the sheer haste of the process, lack of proper groundwork, and more importantly lack of accountability that caused the outcome of Partition not just a political failure, but truly a disastrous collapse.
- E. Legacy and Long-term Influence- the legacy of partition has ongoing effects throughout the subcontinent. The unresolved Kashmir issue, the Kargil War, and the frequent conflicts at the border can largely be traced back to that hasty division. Refugee relocation policies in both India and Pakistan have become a basis for questions of citizenship and belonging today, particularly for many minorities. In literature and heritage, the legacy of partition remains cemented. Autobiographies, novels, and poetry such as "Train to Pakistan" by Khushwant Singh, "Tamas" by Bhisham Sahni, and "Ice-Candy Man" by Bapsi Sidhwa all convey the torment, violence, absurdity, and overall emotional state at the time of partition. In the contemporary political theatre, political parties on both sides of the border continue to narrativize partition to produce or incite nationalist fervour. Unfortunately, the humanitarian catastrophe of partition is eclipsed by political agendas, which highlights the need for more humane and human-centric remembrance of partition's legacy.

## Conclusion

The Partition of India in 1947 is one of the most ambiguous and horrifying events of South Asian history. It was not simply a grand line drawn across a map at a particular time in history, it was an injury that changed the lives of millions of people. Throughout this research, we have asked

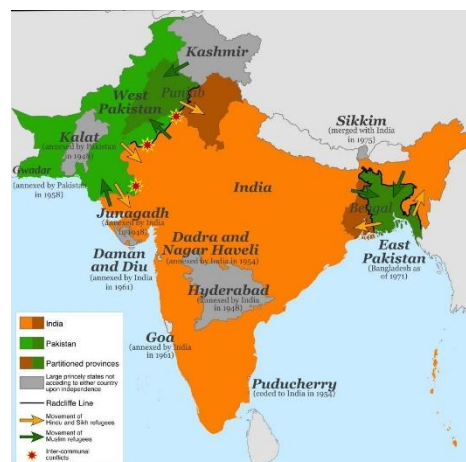
whether Partition was a high-level attraction of political fruit, or whether the Partition was simply a humanitarian disaster; our finding is that both narratives must converge as to the nature of the Partition as both a political decision and a historically great failure of humanitarianism or a humanitarian disaster. At the most basic level, the Partition was a political wound, connected to political struggle, colonial maladministration, and consciousness of religion (indoctrination). The commonality of differentiating people as a plan to keep rule was consistent throughout British colonial rule; therefore, under the banner of 'divide and rule', overarching distrust of religious communities was created. The ideological fight between Indian National Congress, the Muslim League gained momentum through the late decades of British rule where both parties were unwilling to back down from their position and opinion of how to factor the future of India. While Singh, O'Hanlon, N. Nehru, Jinnah, Gandhi, and other big names of nationalism did stake a position on their own ideas for national identity or independence, they were ultimately all leaders who were unable to politically negotiate a way to accommodate the religious and cultural diversity found in the subcontinent. Given that the Cabinet Mission Plan, which represented a compromise relying on uniting as a benefit of a federal structure, failed to produce any outcomes of significance, the situation moved from bad to worse. Political bargaining had shifted into styles of frenzied escapes. There was little doubt that the British wanted to make a hurried retreat from India after being battered by the experience of the Second World War and having been consumed by frantic anti-colonial responses within the colonies. Lord Mountbatten's decision to pull the date of independence forward into August created an instruction for withdrawing from India with extreme haste, which left no time for planning, negotiation, and peacebuilding. Whether by accident or design, Cyril Radcliffe was handed the task of delineating the physical borders without any gut knowledge of sub-continental geography, culture, or population, and this was done. You might imagine, in circumstances of extreme chaos and great panic. The borderline known as the Radcliffe Line was not only arbitrary but was drawn with remarkable disdain. The Redcliffe Line was a line that divided villages, families and communities within the context of a single night. To examine the violence and displacement as only administrative failure however, would be an insufficient read. Moreover, the partition and the decolonization of India unleashed, we can assume the unimaginable in terms of humanitarian catastrophe. Tormenting estimates indicate that an estimated 10 - 15 million displaced persons suffered one of the world's largest mass migrations in recorded history. Communal riots, pogroms and extreme gender-based violence, saw the sub-

continent become scenes of horror, with trainloads of both bounded and unbounded refugees travelling between India and Pakistan often arriving at their destination or midway, filled with mutilated corpses. Women were decoupled from acts of abduction, rape and even murder, at the hands of family members, in some distorted sense of honour. The displaced children and the elderly people who were abandoned on roads to die. The cities of Lahore, Amritsar, and Delhi became the stage of slaughter, confrontation, eulogies, despair, and pity and even rural areas, where there was little communal violence in their existence, were not left untouched by mob violence. In this context, we cannot only view Partition through political negotiations and constitution arrangements. To understand Partition, we must view it from the standpoint of human beings, broken family ties, uprooted homes, trauma without end. The literature around Partition, such as *Train to Pakistan*, *Tamas*, and *Ice-Candy Man*, is evidence of the emotional and psychological damage caused to individuals. The oral histories, memoirs, and refugees accounts indicate the silenced woes of ordinary people who had no agency in making decisions that affected all aspects of their lives. In all of this, Partition has, of course, drawn on modernity and become a resource in political mobilisation. More than seventy years later our narratives around Partition continue to be instrumentalised in electoral politics, peace speeches or community conflicts, to conjure up communal hysterias or to define a national identity in oppositional terms. The Indo-Pak confrontations such as the wars fought around the question of Kashmir, the Kargil conflict, and regular border skirmishes would simply be an extension of unresolved issues from 1947. Refugee resettlement policies, minority rights, and citizenship debates continue to be shaped by the historical legacy of Partition. This study is unable to classify Partition as anything other than a calculated political act and a monumental humanitarian disaster. The actions taken by political actors, both British and Indian, had consequences beyond their imaginations. Whether the Indian and British political decisions-makers could not or would not envision or ameliorate the consequences of their decisions is an open-ended question. What is worryingly glaring is that millions of people became refugees in their own land, and many of the traumas of Partition have been generational; people continue to suffer from the legacy of Partition, and trauma continues to inform policies and practices affecting minorities and refugees. Unfortunately, on par with the political benchmarks of Partition, the human effects of Partition have never attracted as much representation in state narratives and formal historiography. There is an imperative to heal our past. Both India and Pakistan must avoid blaming each other and speak to and about the pain of

Partition. Historical memory can only be addressed in the context of regional cooperation, mutual understanding, and shared empathy to forge a less troubled future that treats history as a pathway to peace rather than political conflict. Educational programs in the two nations must provide objective accounts of the Partition, including not just the political dimensions, but also the stories of suffering and of the human spirit. Memorials, museums, and cultural performances should memorialize the memories of the victims and ensure they are not buried in silence. Ultimately, the Partition of India cannot be reduced to a single moment in history, but is best understood as a kaleidoscope of decisions, accidents, and tragedies that have shaped and etched their way into the history of the subcontinent. Seeing it as both a government strategy and humanitarian crisis gives meaning to its scope. Only by grappling with this painful history with integrity and compassion, can we, as people from India, Pakistan, and the diaspora, have a chance at reconciliation, peace and collective futures.

## Archives and Appendices

### Appendix A: Map of the Radcliffe Line (1947)



This map shows the **Radcliffe Line**, the hastily drawn border demarcation between India and Pakistan, implemented after Lord Mountbatten's announcement of early British withdrawal. The line divided **Punjab and Bengal**, regions most affected by communal violence and migration.

#### Key Features:

- Division of **Lahore** and **Amritsar** region
- Eastern Bengal (East Pakistan) and West Bengal (India)
- Areas where boundary decisions were contested or reversed post-announcement

**Source:** British Library Archives; National Archives of India

## Appendix B: Refugee Camp Photographs (1947-1950)



A collection of rare black-and-white photographs from refugee camps in:

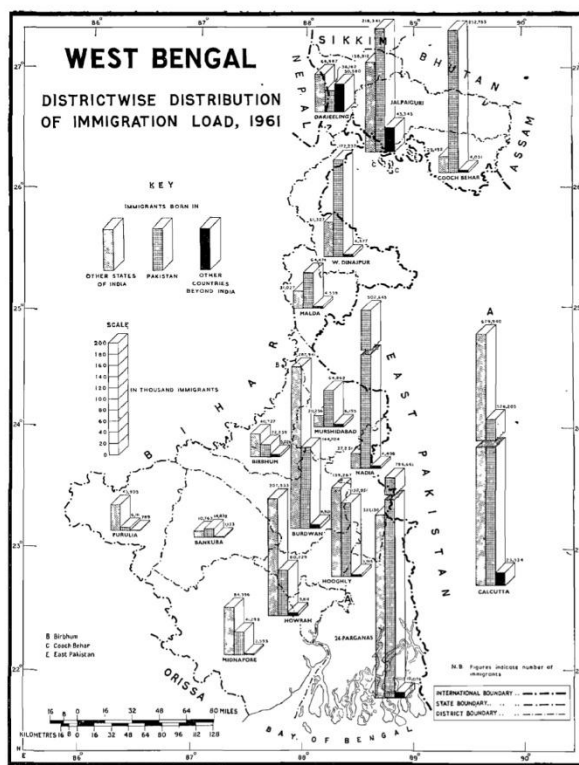
- Kurukshetra Camp (Punjab, India)
- Kingsway Camp (Delhi, India)
- Dhaka and Chittagong camps (East Pakistan)

### Image Descriptions:

- Mass tents and makeshift hospitals
- Women and children receiving aid
- Trains arriving with refugees—many looted or with casualties
- Volunteers from the Indian National Congress and international aid organizations offering support

**Sources:** Nehru Memorial Museum & Library; Photo Division of the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting (GoI)

## Appendix C: Table – District-wise Migration Statistics (1947–1948)



District/Region	Direction Migration	of Estimated Migrants	Primary Cause
Lahore	India → Pakistan	300,000+	Communal Riots & Targeted Killings
Amritsar	Pakistan → India	500,000+	Religious Persecution
Delhi	Pakistan → India	200,000+	Mass Transfer by Trains
East Bengal (Dhaka, etc.)	India → East Pakistan	100,000+	Political Fear
Sindh (Karachi, etc.)	India → Pakistan	150,000+	Urban Exodus of Muslims
Jammu & Kashmir	Bi-directional	250,000+	Armed Conflicts & Riots

**Total Displacement:** Estimated **10–15 million people** migrated across newly drawn borders.

**Source:** Ministry of Home Affairs (1948), Talbot & Singh (2009), 1947 Partition Archive.

## Appendix D: Oral Testimonies Extracts (1947 Partition Archive)

<https://www.1947partitionarchive.org/collections/>

Below are excerpts from verified oral accounts recorded by the **1947 Partition Archive**:

“We hid under a bridge while trains full of bloodied corpses passed by... I was 12 then.”

— *Rajinder Kaur, Punjab Survivor*

“My mother never spoke of what happened. We only knew she lost her sister on the train to Lahore.”

— *Shaista Ahmed, Refugee from Amritsar*

“I was born in the camp. My first photo is with the Red Cross volunteers who saved us.”

— *Jameela Bano, Delhi Camp Resident*

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