



# Partition Of India Through Human Perspective And A Sense Of Belonging And Alienation

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## 1) Abstract

The year 1947 is much known to the Indian subcontinent and the world as the year when India and Pakistan got independence from the British rule. Both the countries had long been under the rule for nearly two centuries. This period was marked by financial, social and religious exploitation. The Britishers had no intentions to leave the subcontinent on its own any time soon. But as they participated in the second world war on behalf of the allied group which went on for six years, they were bankrupted and were very short on resources to run the administration of India. So they decided to grant freedom to India. But while doing so, they divided it into two countries on the basis of religion. One was India of Hindus and the other was Pakistan of Muslims.

Religious and communal differences were among the things which beautified the Indian subcontinent and presented it in front of the world as a multicultural land. Such things prevail in the society only when human values are there. But this identity was tarnished because of the partition of India and the bloody and gory events that took place during it. This research paper contains personal views of the people who actually witnessed the partition and brings out their perspective about it and a sense of belonging and alienation they have felt over the years because of partition.

**2) Keywords :** Partition, Freedom, Human Perspective, Interviews, Eye-witnesses, Experiences, Migration, Religious Riots, Violence, Massacre, Conflict, Homeland, Motherland, Foreign Land, Sense of Belonging, Sense of Alienation

## 3) Introduction

People of Pakistan and India celebrate 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> August as their independence days. But very few of them know the other side of this freedom and happiness. This freedom and happiness came their way at the cost of countless lives and resources. This way was gruesome, bloody, gory, full of hatred and anger. It has given us permanent scars of deep sorrow, separation, heartbreak and alienation. In the months before and after the independence and partition, people from both the countries migrated to other side of the border. Much of the Hindus from Pakistan migrated to India while Muslims from India migrated to Pakistan in a hope of better and secured lives as they were going to reside in countries of their own religions. But little did they know that while trying to cross the border, they were going to be engulfed by fire and fury of religious and communal riots fuelled by hatred, agony and anger.

Some people from Hindu, Muslim and Sikh communities started killing others in the name of religion and community. Abduction, rape and murder were normalised and commonolised during those months. Innocent people paid the price of independence with their lives. Those who were saved and escaped the riots are the people who can tell us what really happened at that time. Any incident can best be understood if it is narrated by the persons who actually witnessed it. So the survivors of partition and their relatives and descendants are the best source of actual and real information about partition. So real life experiences and eye-witness accounts can throw light on the real situation of partition for us. The present research paper intends to highlight the

partition of India through the words of the people who actually have witnessed it or have heard about it from real survivors who happen to be their ancestors and relatives. This research paper is based on the book titled "The Footprints of Partition : Narratives of Four Generations of Pakistanis and Indians" written by Pakistani writer Anam Zakaria and contains interviews of such people. This paper tries to understand their perspective about partition in an overall manner and tries to get to know their sense of belonging and alienation after decades.

The religious and communal violence has touched each and every human that lived in both the countries directly or indirectly. It took lives of men, women, children, animals and most importantly it tarnished the purpose of the human existence. Not only religion and politics but also the feeling of insecurity, discomfort and uncertainty of the common people of the various communities involved was equally responsible for such unforgettable event. It was not just a political or religious error, it was also a human error. The ignited feelings of the common people were fuelled by the religious and political sentiments. Our idea of partition is formed on the basis of the government archives and records. It is very much political. But there is an unheard history of the partition which involves the experiences of common people. As the common people started realising that India was being granted independence by the British empire, communal hatred and discussions started building up in and around the subcontinent. The written history gives us an idea about the high politics. But the non-fictional representation through literature tells us about completely different dimension. It highlights the suffrage of the common man across the borders of the then newly formed India and Pakistan.

The partition affected life at various levels. Politically and geographically, India was divided. Personally, families and people were separated. Their lives were shattered. They had nowhere to go. They were in dilemma. Their emotions, feelings, cries were deeply lost in the dark noise of the religious slogans and their bodies were smeared in the bloodshed that took place during the partition. The lost voices of slaughtered people, raped women and the cries of small children, all these unexpected things have been made alive by the non-fictional literature. The study of this non-fictional literature paves the way for a fuller understanding of the carnage unleashed by the partition of India. Though there are many excellent fictional literary works that highlight the partition of India, the actual situation of those times can better be understood through real life stories and oral accounts narrated by people who have witnessed the partition. Such stories and accounts can be considered as non-fictional partition literature. We must look at partition as an event which affected humans the most. Instead of looking at it as a political event, we should rather look at it as a social event which reconstructed the Indian as well as the Pakistani societies. The partition also highlighted how religion and community play the most important role in common people's lives and how its exaggeration can lead to catastrophe.

The partition can better be understood through the human perspective. The actual survivors of the unimaginable religious holocaust and their descendants have been voiced by many writers from both India and Pakistan. One such writer is Anam Zakaria. She hails from Pakistan. She herself is a descendant of a family which was directly affected by the partition on a larger scale. So the partition and its effect on the human society can be explored through her book "The Footprints of Partition : Narratives of Four Generations of Pakistanis and Indians". This book contains real life accounts and experiences narrated by the people who witnessed the partition and lived for many years after it. Some of them lived in India while some resided in Pakistan after migrating. The book mentioned above contains interviews of fourteen people conducted by Anam Zakaria. These people are from both India and Pakistan. One of the most intriguing things about this collection of interviews is it gives a better idea of partition. As today's generation knows only about independence and very less about partition, this book serves a good purpose of highlighting the things that took place at the backdrop of independence. In general, people know only about independence that we got in August-1947. But they don't know the events that took place since months prior to it and how they are the actual price at which we got independence. This research paper is aimed at highlighting the events of the partition through the human perspective and how its survivors and their descendants are still trying to cope with it.

The main idea of this research paper is how the common people of India and Pakistan had to pay a heavy price of partition and had to migrate from India to Pakistan and vice-versa. In this process, many of these people lost their loved ones as thousands of people were slaughtered and massacred on the basis of religion and community. Some of them lost their entire family while some were separated from it. While some had to flee to Pakistan while some remained in India and vice-versa. Indian Muslims were forced to migrate to Pakistan and Pakistani Hindus fled to India for safety. Lot of them lost their lives at the hands of people from opposite community while crossing the border on foot or by vehicles.

These victims lost their homes, belongings and much more. Since they had to leave behind everything, they still miss their relatives, homes and belongings. They still remember everything that happened during partition and how their lives were turned upside down in just a matter of days. Though they migrated to new alien lands physically, they still live at their previous homes mentally. They have not been able to forget their roots and origins. They miss their family members who were either left behind or were killed during the chaos.

Through the book “The Footprints of Partition : Narratives of Four Generations of Pakistanis and Indians” penned by Anam Zakaria, this research paper tends to bring out the sense of belonging and alienation through the human perspective and how the partition of the Indian subcontinent is a perfect example of human tragedy caused by religious and communal tensions.

#### 4) Discussion

As humans are the main habitants of this world, anything that happens affects them directly or indirectly. Each and every event that takes place has a human side to it. Partition of the Indian subcontinent is no exception. India was under the British rule from nearly two centuries. It was dreaming of being independent. India was freed from the British empire in August-1947. The British empire withdrew itself from India as it was already exhausted from fighting the second world war. The Indian independence was a victory in the political context. The rumors of independence were circulating in the Indian subcontinent since the start of the year 1947. Along with that, the Muslim leadership was keen on having a separate nation of Muslims as it had its own political ambitions. It fuelled the sentiments of the Muslim community which resulted in the Hindus and Sikhs following the same path.

There was a sudden change in social scenario. These communities started considering each other enemies. A sudden sense of enmity and detachment had risen between these communities. As the Muslim leadership was vouching for Pakistan of Muslims, a large Muslim population residing in India had made up its mind to migrate to Pakistan via the Punjab region. At the same time, Hindu people from Pakistan had started discussing their relocation to India. The migration started in the first quarter of 1947. Hindus and Sikhs from Pakistan started coming to India while Muslims were leaving India behind for Pakistan. This mass migration was taking place through the Punjab region. As all these three communities were high on their religious sentiments, they started abducting and killing each other. Women were raped, children were murdered. Hindus and Sikhs killed Muslims who were still in India while Pakistani Muslims slaughtered Hindus. They had only one thing to say to each other, “Go to your own place meant for you only. We are not same. Do not stay with us.” False news and information played a vital role in the violence. It was a tit for tat game for these communities.

In this madness, common people were killed by common people. While only some people had inflicted this situation, innocent people suffered the most. They lost their families, homes, properties, belongings and everything that was dear to them. All this inhuman and unheard information has been given by fourteen survivors of partition and their descendants to Anam Zakaria. She has made them speak because they were silent since a long time and had kept their stories and experiences in a corner of their hearts. Zakaria’s book is made up of fourteen interviews where men and women have talked about their experiences. As Zakaria is a Pakistani writer, she has interviewed more Pakistani people as compared to Indians. It is very difficult to meet the Indian people even today, she opines in the book. This thing clearly shows the type of relationship India and Pakistan share. This relationship and its present state has its roots in the partition that happened in 1947 on the basis of religion.

The writer Anam Zakaria has travelled deep into Pakistani as well as Indian territories to dig up the hidden feelings of the people who have something deep to say about the partition of India. While doing so, Zakaria was accompanied by her colleagues as well as local people which makes the book more precise and promising to read. As a result, this collection of interviews is a perfect testament to the feelings and emotions of the people who experienced the partition and the descendants and relatives who share a bond with them. Interview technique has been used by Anam Zakaria for this book which makes it a reliable source.

The book has been divided into four parts, each of which highlights a different perspective of people from different generations and age groups about partition and its effect on their lives. The book contains fourteen chapters highlighting feelings of fourteen people. Some talk about the sense of being trapped in foreign land, some express about how it feels to be away from home, some memorise the past while some pour out their hearts about the relationship they share with the country on the other side of the border.



All of them come up with one common thought that is a sense of belonging and alienation. Though they or their ancestors migrated to the country on the other side of the border, they still feel the connection they have with their towns, cities, homes, properties and relatives. Though their minds are fully occupied with their own lives, the partition of India and the events still reside in a corner of their minds. The partition of India through human perspective and sense of belonging and alienation can better be understood through four parts of the book “The Footprints of Partition : Narratives of Four Generations of Pakistanis and Indians”. Some of the interviews have been studied in detail for this research paper as follows :

**i) Blurred Lines :** This chapter contains interview of Naseer Ashiq who resides in Punjab region of Pakistan. He has shared the story of his father Saraf Din, a Pakistani who was born in a Muslim family but was adopted by a Sikh man from India when both the countries were not separated and was brought up by him with lots of love and affection. So much so that Saraf Din looked like a Sikh despite being a Muslim. Later on during partition when communal riots broke out, Saraf, a Muslim, was sent back to Pakistan by his Sikh family for a safer and better life. Naseer Ashiq was a small child when partition took place. Later on, his father Saraf would cry in memory of his Sikh family. He would long to meet them. Further Ashiq tells that once his father met them at the border when people from both the countries had gathered for a religious festival. They tightly hugged each other and cried. Ashiq was a small child to understand his father’s emotions at that time, but now as a grown up man, he understands what it’s like to be away from one’s own beloved family for so long. Saraf Din died longing for his family from India but could not meet them because of strict rules and bitter relations between the two countries. So Naseer Ashiq tried to fulfil his father’s dying wish and tried his best to meet his father’s family but could not do so. He was rejected by the Indian High Commission and other officials thrice.

Not just this, Ashiq had to struggle a lot during the Indo-Pak wars of 1965 and 1971 when both the countries and their politics made it very difficult for the common citizens to lead a normal life. This situation is a direct result of enmity and bitterness that has formed since partition. During the interview, Naseer Ashiq says ‘Bara dil karta hai jane ka, bohat mohabbat hai Hindustan se’ which means he really wants to visit India as there is immense love in his heart for his father’s paternal place. Here we can see a common man’s emotions and pain that has been passed on from a father to a son. Naseer Ashiq is the son of a Muslim father who died crying to see his beloved Sikh family and Ashiq tries to meet them to cherish his father’s memory and fulfil his last wish. But he has not been able to do so. Here we can definitely see the partition through a common man’s perspective and how he still senses the connection he has with India. But still people care less about enmity and bitterness between two countries as they come together for religious festivals that take place on the border.

**ii) The Bus That Did Not Stop :** Mohammad Rauf, a Muslim, is the interviewee for this chapter. He resided in a small locality of Amritsar in undivided India and now lives in Sahiwal, a small town near Lahore, Pakistan. When partition took place, he was nine years old. Because of the religious tension and communal riots, his family decided to move to Lahore for a few days till the tense situation normalised. But they did not know that partition was going to happen and that they would not be able to return to Amritsar and see their home again. It was only after years that Mohammad Rauf got to set foot on the Indian land because of a religious festival he was going to attend in Qadian, a small city near Amritsar.

He took a bus from the Wagah border to Qadian. He had city visa only for Qadian, the place of festival and Batala, a stop on the way. His city Amritsar was on the route but he could not get down and see his beloved place closely enough because he did not have permission to get off at other places. At the immigration counter at Wagah border, he was treated with affection by Indian officials because his passport mentioned his Indian roots. This thing made him eager for his birth place and he got lost in the memories of his childhood. Only because of this, he felt an urge to see his home and the area where he grew up. He wanted to meet his friends and beloved people. While travelling to Qadian, he could only see his birth place from the window of the bus. He could not get down. In order to see it more, he even bribed the driver to drive for some more time in Amritsar so he could cherish his memories. He saw the place where he took education and played with his classmates. He wanted to get down and get closer to the places but the bus did not stop

During the interview, he also memorises the type of relations he had with Sikh and Hindu children. They used to play together and exchange sweets on the auspicious occasions. “Those were different days.”, he opines. Here we can get to know how Mohammad Rauf feels about his birth place in India and how he still continues to cherish his memories. This thing certainly shows that partition has snatched the happy lives of countless people and sometimes they feel a sense belonging to motherland and alienated in foreign country.

**iii) Tea At No-Man's-Land :** This chapter contains the story of Tina Vachani as narrated by herself. She is a Hindu who lived in Karachi with her family. She was a happy Hindu who enjoyed her childhood in Pakistan with her Muslim friends. They had a strong bond of love. Right after giving her tenth class exam, she went to India to meet her maternal grandparents in 1971, just before the the Indo-Pak war and the separation of Bangladesh happened. It was a casual visit to India. But the tension between the two countries and bitter relations made her to stay in Delhi and she got stuck there forever with her maternal grandparents. She could see her family only after six years in 1977. Stubborn bureaucracy and strict laws and rules played a huge part in her story. She was made to take Indian citizenship as she opines and she stayed in Delhi forever. Despite being with her maternal grandparents, she used to feel lonely as it was a whole new world for her in total.

In 1977, her parents and there friends had come to the border in Amritsar to meet her. Tina also went from Delhi accompanied by her maternal uncle. Her father was granted special permission to get to the last point of border from the Pakistani side but Tina was refused to get closer to the border despite her heartfelt requests and pleadings. She could not meet him but only could see him from distance. Later on, her father died of a heart attack after two months and his wish to see his daughter remained unfulfilled. Tina still remembers that day and cries for not being able to meet her father. But afterwards, as she grew up into an adult person, she started visiting her loved ones regularly in Pakistan.

She still remembers her childhood and everything from Karachi. In the initial days of her stay in Delhi, she used to feel alienated but now she is a happy person who regularly travels to Karachi. Though she is an Indian citizen now, She has a sense of belonging towards her home and memories in Karachi, Pakistan. So much so that now she runs an organisation named 'Routes2Roots' which helps people of India and Pakistan in being in touch through different means.

**iv) Letting Go :** Roshan Ara is the centre of attraction of this interview. She is a Muslim form Lahore whose father was at very high position in government and served in the undivided India. She was thirteen years old at the time of partition. As a dancer, she used to put up shows for general public in hilly areas of Kashmir while on a vacation during 1947 near the border with her friends from Hindu, Sikh and Christian communities. She did not have any idea about what was happening at the time of partition. Her mother left her family behind in India and went to Lahore in 1947 for supporting the Muslim leadership keen on demanding a separate country of Muslims. Later on during the partition, the whole family settled in Lahore at its already present home. But Roshan could not see her Hindu friends again as most of them were either migrated to India or something bad had happened to them.

As a child, Roshan used to roam the Indian cities freely with her friends without any concern. It was only at the time of partition that there was a sudden feeling of insecurity and discomfort. As her family moved to Lahore, she started her formal education there. But after partition, a lot of things had changed drastically. The School desks were empty where once her Hindu friends sat. She could no longer play and giggle with them. It was only after many years that she got to meet many of her Hindu friends from India when she went there on trips as a celebrated choreographer. During her visits to India afterwards, she visited most of the places where she used to enjoy with her friends before partition. Even when she went abroad, she talked mostly to Indians about art as she had a close relationship with Indians back at home and there definitely was a sense of belonging.

Roshan Ara, being a daughter of a highly ranked government official, also shares her thoughts about the partition through a bureaucratic perspective. She thinks 1947 was a victory of Pakistan as Muslims got their own country and India too won the 1971 war and enjoyed victory by creating Bangladesh. Here we can see the joy both the countries get very frequently by winning over another. This shows us the type of relationship they have. As a child, Roshan had volunteered at the Lahore camp for refugees who had migrated from India. She says that it was the most gruesome period of her life at the camp. There was only blood, death and sorrow around her. It must have been same in India too. This shows us what the real situation was on both sides of the border. Through Roshan Ara's story, we come to know how she still belongs to India despite being a Pakistani citizen and how she felt during her childhood as she could not see many of her friends again. It is a perfect example of a sense of belonging and alienation and also serves as a good perspective about the partition of India.

**v) A Delhi That Was Only Theirs :** Mansoor Ahmad is the interviewee for this chapter which talks about the relationship Pakistani people share with India today. Ahmad is a Pakistani diplomat who was fourteen years old at the time of partition. His Father was a professor at a government college in Lahore. They lived in a posh area called Model Town. During the interview, Mansoor Ahmad has recalled the partition and its backdrop as well as the years after partition.

During his school education, most of his friends were Hindus and Sikhs as the school was almost full of them. They played together and ate at each other's houses without any second thought. His school emphasized education and taught about human and moral values. It was only because of his school that he had developed a strong bond with his Hindu and Sikh friends. He says people in Lahore used to celebrate each other's festivals. Eid was celebrated by Hindus and Sikhs also and Diwali was a happy and golden occasion for Muslims. They would exchange sweets and eat feasts at their homes. Everything was normal till July 1947. But the month of August brought a sudden unwanted change in their lives. Mansoor and his friends bid temporary goodbyes to each other in July having no idea that they were going to be separated forever on the basis of religion and that they would never meet again.

Mansoor has also his memories about the refugee camp in Lahore where millions of Muslims from India had come as if it was their only home in the world. He further tells that rape, murder and abduction were normal things during that period. Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims were killing each other as well as they were helping each other. Humanity and inhumanity were marching ahead. Muslims in Lahore would help Hindus to get into trucks which were taking them to India and they would promise each others to be in touch and Hindus would promise them that they would come back once things were normalised.

Mansoor, being a renowned diplomat, used his connections to get in touch with his childhood friends from school who live in India. They had a reunion. Mansoor also visited India once with his wife. They lived in Delhi and were treated by most people with love and affection. He even met some people who were originally from Lahore but had come to India during partition. They used to ask him about their motherland, their homes, their places and what not. His stay at Delhi made him realise what type of deep connection there is between Pakistan and India even after decades of partition. Mansoor, a diplomat, further says that paths of people from both the countries have been tied together in a strange course of history, it is impossible to get away from that.

Mansoor Ahmad's story tells us that not just him but people from all walks of life from both the countries feel a strong connection. It is nothing but a sense of belonging and alienation at the same time.

## 5) Conclusion

To conclude, we can say that partition of India may have been a victory in political and geographical context, but it was definitely a defeat in social and human context. Because people and families were separated, friends were lost and loved ones disappeared because of a handful of people involved in religious and communal violence. But then some people still managed to carry on the relationship of love and affection. After all, humanity is all about loving and helping each other. The interviews and interviewees mentioned above highlight the hidden relationship of love and affection between India and Pakistan that exists. Hence the title of the research paper can be justified as we can sense the sense of belonging and alienation experienced by people of India and Pakistan.

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