



Ministry of Culture
Government of India

THE PARTITION OF INDIA

Memory, Loss And Resilience

14 AUGUST 1947



Partition of India

A Line Drawn in Blood

Subcontinent Divided

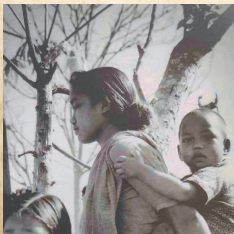
The Partition of India in 1947 was far more than the drawing of a new border. It was one of the largest and most traumatic forced migrations in human history, transforming the lives of millions across Punjab, Bengal, Sindh, Delhi, Jammu & Kashmir, and many other regions.

Cities, towns, and villages that had flourished through centuries of shared history were suddenly divided, leaving families separated, communities uprooted, and familiar landscapes forever changed.

The Great Migration

Nearly six million non-Muslims were forced to leave the territories that became West Pakistan, while around 6.5 million Muslims migrated there from Punjab, Delhi, and other parts of India.

In the east, an estimated two million non-Muslims fled East Bengal (now Bangladesh), with another two million seeking refuge in West Bengal by around 1950. During the same period, nearly one million Muslims migrated from West Bengal. The violence accompanying this upheaval claimed an estimated half a million to over a million lives.



India Before Partition

Changing the Political Landscape (1905–1919)

A Turning Point

The early twentieth century marked a significant turning point in India's constitutional history. The Partition of Bengal (1905) sparked widespread political mobilisation and intensified public debate on governance, representation and India's political future.

The Rise of New Political Voices

The formation of the All-India Muslim League (1906) added a new dimension to organised political representation. As political participation expanded, different organisations increasingly articulated their own visions for India's constitutional future.

The Changing Nature of Representation

The Indian Councils Act (1909) introduced separate electorates for Muslims, creating distinct electoral constituencies based on religious identity. This marked a significant shift in the evolving framework of representative government under British rule.

Reforms and Representation

Subsequent constitutional reforms expanded legislative councils and widened political participation. While these measures brought more Indians into the political process, they also reshaped debates on representation, governance and constitutional safeguards.

A New Constitutional Era

These developments transformed India's constitutional journey. As representative politics evolved, questions of identity, power-sharing and political representation became increasingly central to the constitutional discourse—issues that would continue to shape India's future in the decades ahead.

India Before Partition

Deadlock and Rising Tensions (1946-1947)

Towards a Final Decision

By early 1947, the focus shifted from **whether** power would be transferred to **how** it would be transferred. Britain announced its intention to transfer power by June 1948. Lord Louis Mountbatten arrived in March 1947 to oversee the final phase of negotiations.

THE NEW VICEROY OF INDIA: LORD MOUNTBATTEN'S ARRIVAL AT DELHI.



Arrival of Last Viceroy to India

India Before Partition

The Decision to Partition (1947)

Britain's Decision

In **February 1947**, the British Government announced its intention to transfer power in India. Prime Minister **Clement Attlee** declared that power would be transferred no later than **June 1948**. The announcement marked the beginning of the final phase of Britain's rule in India.

The Mountbatten Plan

Lord **Louis Mountbatten**, the last Viceroy, held intensive consultations with Indian political leaders. The **3 June Plan** proposed the partition of British India.

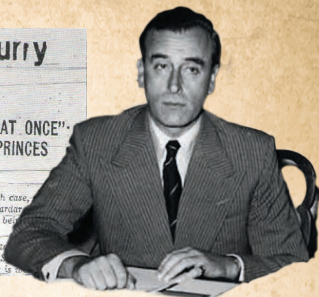
It provided for the creation of two independent Dominions - **India** and **Pakistan**. The proposal was accepted by the principal political parties as the framework for the transfer of power.

Giving Legal Effect

The **Indian Independence Act, 1947** gave legal effect to the decision. The Act created the Dominions of **India** and **Pakistan**, effective **15 August 1947**. It provided the legal framework for the transfer of sovereignty and the division of British India.

Drawing New Borders

Preparations for independence moved forward at remarkable speed. The **Radcliffe Boundary Commission** was tasked with demarcating the new international boundary. The **Radcliffe Award** was made public only after Independence, leaving millions uncertain about which nation they would belong to.



The press conference held in New Delhi where the partition plan was unveiled. Seen left to right are Jawaharlal Nehru, Lord Ismay (Mountbatten's advisor), Viceroy Lord Louis Mountbatten, and Muhammad Ali Jinnah.

The last Viceroy of India, Lord Mountbatten, held a historic press conference. It was only the second and final time in British India's history that a Viceroy addressed the press. Over 300 journalists had gathered, representatives from the United States, Russia, China, Europe, and every corner of India - listening intently to the Viceroy's announcement.

This announcement came to be known as the Mountbatten Plan—a formal declaration about both India's independence and its partition. Accelerating the original timeline by nearly a year, Mountbatten set August 15 as the date for the transfer of power. He also proposed the outline for partition, including the division of Punjab and Bengal.

The journalists present raised pointed questions—chief among them:

What would happen to the people forced to migrate as a result of this division?

“They will Transfer Themselves” A tragedy in the Making

"Personally I don't see it (people moving out) ... some measure of transfer will come about in a natural way ... people will transfer themselves."

[illegible]

June 1947: Announcement of the partition in the newspaper

India Before Partition

The Radcliffe Line



Drawing a Divided Land

Sir Cyril Radcliffe, a British lawyer who had never before set foot in India, was given just **40 days** to draw the new borders between India and Pakistan.

Working under immense time pressure, he divided provinces, districts, and communities without personally visiting the villages, studying the rivers and forests, or fully understanding the economic and social networks that connected people across the region.

In Bengal, Partition was carried out largely on religious lines, often disregarding long-established economic linkages. In Punjab, however, the consequences of the Radcliffe Line proved even more devastating. The division

of the province transformed millions of Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs into minorities almost overnight, triggering one of the largest and most violent forced migrations in modern history. Although the boundaries had been drawn, there was no comprehensive plan to manage the enormous movement of people that Partition unleashed.

The human cost of this hurried division was catastrophic and continues to shape the memories of millions on both sides of the border. Radcliffe never returned to India after completing his task. He is reported to have believed that both India and Pakistan would have held him responsible for the suffering caused by the boundary he had drawn.



India During Partition

The Great Migration Begins

A Journey Into the Unknown

The announcement of Partition transformed millions of lives almost overnight. As the new borders of India and Pakistan emerged, families found themselves on opposite sides of an uncertain frontier.

The Radcliffe Boundary divided **Punjab and Bengal**, separating villages, towns and families. Millions faced the difficult decision of whether to stay or leave. Many departed with only the possessions they could carry, uncertain if they would ever return.



The Largest Migration in History

Within months, an unprecedented movement of people unfolded. An estimated **14–18 million people** crossed the newly created borders.

Hindus and Sikhs migrated towards India, while many Muslims moved towards Pakistan. Never before had such a large population migrated in so short a period.

For millions, home became a memory carried across an unfamiliar border...

For millions, home became a memory carried across an unfamiliar border...



India During Partition

The Human Cost of Partition

Communities in Turmoil

The migration was accompanied by widespread violence across several regions. Towns and villages experienced communal conflict. Families were separated in the chaos. Many lost loved ones, homes and livelihoods.

Lives Forever Changed

The human cost of Partition extended far beyond physical displacement. Hundreds of thousands lost their lives; estimates vary among historians. Countless women and children endured profound hardship. Generations carried memories of loss, separation and uncertainty.



**Behind every statistic was a family,
a home and a life forever changed...**



India During Partition

Journeys Across New Borders

Trains of Hope and Despair

Railways became the principal means of migration. Refugee trains carried millions across the new frontiers. Even good trains became a lifeline for many finding new ground. Railway stations became places of reunion, separation and uncertainty. Many journeys were marked by extraordinary hardship and danger.



Columns on the Move

Not everyone travelled by rail. Thousands crossed on foot, by bullock cart, bicycle and truck. Long refugee columns stretched for miles across roads and fields. The migration continued for many months after Independence.



Every road, every railway line and every caravan carried stories of courage, grief and survival...

India During Partition

Women Bore the Brunt of Partition



Gendered Narratives of Partition

The Partition of India in 1947 exposed women to some of the gravest forms of communal violence. Thousands were abducted, subjected to sexual assault, forced into marriage, trafficked, or separated from their families. Women were often targeted as symbols of community honour.

Loss and Recovery

Amid the violence, many women lost their lives or were separated from their loved ones. After Partition, the Governments of India and Pakistan undertook one of the largest recovery operations in history. Between 1947 and the mid-1950s, over 30,000 abducted women were officially recovered and repatriated across the new border.

Resilience and Renewal

For many survivors, returning home brought fresh challenges, including social stigma and family rejection. Yet countless women rebuilt their lives with extraordinary resilience, becoming teachers, nurses, entrepreneurs, artisans, social workers, and heads of households. Their courage and determination became an enduring part of India's nation-building story.



India During Partition

A Land Divided

East Punjab, West Punjab

The Radcliffe Line split the historic province of Punjab into East Punjab (India) and West Punjab (Pakistan). Cities that had long been linked through trade, culture, and kinship were suddenly separated. Lahore became part of Pakistan, while Amritsar emerged as India's principal border city.

The Epicentre of Migration

Punjab witnessed the largest exchange of population during Partition. Hindus and Sikhs left Lahore, Rawalpindi, Multan, Lyallpur, Sheikhupura, Sialkot, Gujranwala, and Montgomery for India, while Muslims migrated from Amritsar, Jalandhar, Ludhiana, Ambala, Ferozepur, Hoshiarpur, and Patiala to Pakistan.

Violence Across the Borderlands

Districts such as **Rawalpindi, Lahore, Sheikhupura, Gujranwala, Amritsar, Gurdaspur, and Ferozepur** witnessed widespread communal violence. Villages were destroyed, refugee caravans attacked, and trains crossing the new border became tragic symbols of Partition.

Amritsar: Gateway to Freedom and Refuge

Located just 30 kilometres from the new border, Amritsar became the first refuge for thousands arriving from West Punjab. Its railway station, refugee camps, gurdwaras, and relief kitchens provided shelter and assistance to countless displaced families before they moved to other parts of India.

APPENDIX IV.

15

	Area in sq.miles	Total population	Muslims	Non-Muslims	bikhs.
East Punjab	38535	15686593	6416944	9269749	2784323
	xx	- 3485279	- 3485279	846262	241025
		<u>12201414</u>	<u>2985403</u>	<u>10116011</u>	<u>2925368</u>
West Punjab	50620	12691699	9760034	2931665	973075
		- 3485279	- 3485279	- 846262	- 241025
		<u>16476978</u>	<u>14091575</u>	<u>2085403</u>	<u>732050</u>

APPENDIX IV.

14

Statement of non-muslims in dangerous zones of West Punjab
who require exchange with Muslims of East Punjab.

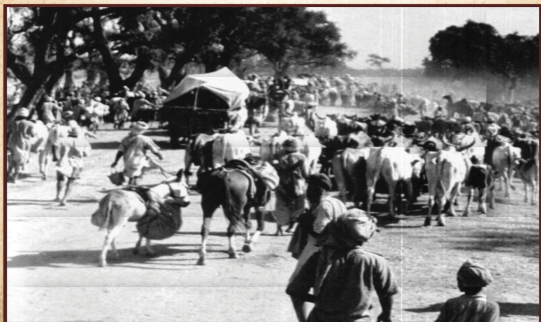
Name of District.	Non-muslims including Sikhs	bikhs.
1. Rawalpindi	157038	64127
2. Mianwali	70061	6865
3. Gujrat	159343	70233
4. Shahpur	163003	48066
5. Jhelum	66626	24680
6. Attock	64747	20120
7. Muzaffargarh	98775	5382
8. D.G. Khan	68672	1072
Total	<u>846267</u>	<u>241025</u>

Partition of Punjab **Lifeline in The Skies**

During the migration, the Indian Air Force also played a vital role.

For instance, in September 1947, aircraft flying over Punjab witnessed a shocking scene, nearly 30,000 refugees were walking on foot over a stretch of about 25 miles (40 kilometers).

These planes spotted hostile mobs lying in wait, planning to attack the exhausted refugees. The aircraft immediately relayed their locations to military patrols on the ground.



Partition of Punjab

The Story of the Derawals

The Land of the Derawals

The Derajat region comprising Dera Ismail Khan, Dera Ghazi Khan, and Mianwali formed the Derajat Division of the undivided Punjab. It was home to vibrant Hindu and Sikh communities engaged in trade, administration, education, and the professions. For generations, these communities contributed to the region's rich cultural and economic life.

Displacement and Migration

Partition forced most Hindu and Sikh Derawals to leave their ancestral homeland in West Punjab. They left behind their homes, businesses, temples, gurdwaras, and centuries-old community ties, undertaking arduous journeys to safety in India.

Building New Lives

Many Derawal families settled in Delhi, Amritsar, Jalandhar, Ludhiana, Ambala, Jaipur, and Mumbai. Despite the trauma of displacement, they rebuilt their lives while preserving the Derawali language, customs, cuisine, and cultural traditions.

A Lasting Legacy

Derawal refugees made significant contributions to commerce, textiles, education, medicine, public service, and industry, playing an important role in the economic and social development of post-Independence India.

Preserving Identity

Community organizations such as the Derawal Sabha helped refugees resettle, supported families in need, and ensured that the history, traditions, and collective memory of the Derawal community continued to be passed on to future generations.

Partition of Punjab Carrying Home in a Sacred Text



**Brought from Dera Ismail Khan during Partition,
this Urdu Bhagavad Gita preserves a family's faith
and community's heritage**

This old Urdu edition of the Bhagavad Gita is a cherished family heirloom brought to India by Mrs. Tuteja's father from Dera Ismail Khan during the Partition of 1947. More than a treasured possession, it is a tangible link to a homeland left behind and to the family's enduring spiritual and cultural heritage.

Once a sacred text used for daily worship, this copy of the Bhagavad Gita today lives on as a vessel of memory, preserving the story of a family, a community, and a way of life that was uprooted but never forgotten.



Partition of Punjab **Profile**

Munni Devi from Dera Ismail Khan

These photographs belong to a family that rebuilt its life in Jaipur after being displaced from Dera Ismail Khan during the Partition of 1947. Like millions of others who were forced to leave their ancestral homes, the family carried with them not only a few cherished belongings but also memories of a homeland they would never return to. Today, these images stand as a testament to their journey of displacement, resilience, and renewal.

Among those who made this journey was Munni Devi, sister of the late Shri Heera Nand Bhatia. Widowed in childhood, she was 37 years old when Partition uprooted her life. She accompanied her family to Jaipur, where she remained with her brother until her passing in 1985. Her life reflects the quiet courage of countless women whose personal stories became an integral part of the larger history of Partition.



This image shows a carved silver mirror and a waistband, heirlooms belonging to a Derawal (Bhatia) family in Jaipur. The waistband is adorned with 19th-century “one-anna” coins, all bearing the name of Queen Victoria of Britain.

Partition of Bengal

The Battle for Bengal

Why Bengal Was Not Entirely Lost

As the demand for Pakistan gathered momentum in the 1940s, the future of Bengal became one of the most contentious questions before Independence. The Muslim League proposed that the whole of Bengal should either become part of Pakistan or emerge as an independent sovereign state, arguing that its economy and geography made division impractical.

Many leaders feared that this would place Calcutta, the industrial, educational and cultural heart of eastern India outside the Indian Union. At this critical juncture, **Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee emerged as the foremost advocate for retaining the Hindu-majority districts of western Bengal within India.** Through sustained political negotiations, public mobilization and constitutional advocacy, he argued that millions of Bengalis should not be compelled to live in a state against their democratic will.



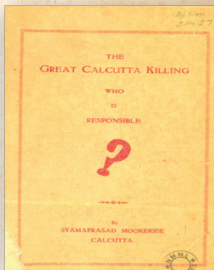
Partition of Bengal

Timeline of Partition in Bengal 1

Date	Event	Significance
16 October 1905	Partition of Bengal by Lord Curzon	Bengal was divided into Eastern Bengal & Assam and Western Bengal, officially for administrative reasons. It sparked the Swadeshi Movement and strengthened nationalist sentiment.
12 December 1911	Annulment of the Partition of Bengal	The British reversed the 1905 partition following sustained public opposition. Bengal was reunited, although Bihar, Orissa and Assam became separate provinces.
23 March 1940	Lahore Resolution	The Muslim League called for independent Muslim-majority states, laying the foundation for Pakistan and raising questions about Bengal's future.
29 July 1946	Announcement	Muslim League announces Direct Action
16 August 1946	Direct Action Day	Communal violence in Calcutta claimed thousands of lives and marked a turning point in Hindu-Muslim relations in Bengal. 16–19 August 1946 etched in history for Great Calcutta Killings.

Partition of Bengal

Dr. Syama Prasad's Leadership During Events Related to Direct Action Day in Bengal



Spread of violence and mayhem

In Kolkata, provoked by the words of HS Suhrawardy, frenzied mobs poured into the streets of Kolkata on the morning of 16 August shouting religious slogans, armed with sticks, iron rods, shovels, and makeshift weapons.

Dr. Syama Prasad championed relief

In the face of government complicity and collapse, Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee did not retreat.

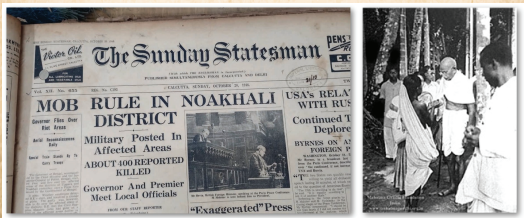
He stepped forward:

- Formed the Hindustan National Guard.
- Led rescue, relief, and protection efforts.
- Personally visited riot-hit areas.
- Mobilized civil defense.

October-
November
1946

Noakhali Violence

Large-scale attacks and displacement in Noakhali led Mahatma Gandhi to undertake his peace mission through the affected villages.



India During Partition

Timeline of Partition in Bengal 2

Date	Event	Significance
2 May 1947	Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee writes to Lord Mountbatten	Mookerjee urged that if India were partitioned, Bengal must also be partitioned so that Hindu-majority western districts could remain within India.
20 June 1947	Bengal Legislative Assembly Vote	The Assembly voted separately. Members from western Bengal favoured Partition and joining India, while eastern Bengal voted to join Pakistan. This became the decisive constitutional step toward dividing Bengal.
3 June 1947	Mountbatten Plan Announced	The British Government accepted Partition as the basis for the transfer of power, including the possibility of partitioning Bengal and Punjab.
15 August 1947	India and Pakistan Become Independent	Bengal stood divided into West Bengal (India) and East Bengal (Pakistan), although the exact boundary had not yet been officially announced.
17 August 1947	Radcliffe Boundary Award Published	The final boundary was announced two days after Independence. Millions discovered which side of the new border their homes had fallen, triggering widespread migration and displacement.

Bengal was already burning in the fire of communalism. The 1946 Calcutta riots had laid the groundwork for communal tension across India. Communities that had lived together on the subcontinent for centuries in a spirit of coexistence now stood divided. All of this was part of the British policy of "Divide and Rule," where they fueled cultural and religious differences to tighten their grip over power.



India Post Partition

Survival to Nation-Building

Relief and Rehabilitation (1947–1950)

- Massive refugee camps established across North and East India.
- Food, shelter, healthcare, and employment provided to millions.
- Rehabilitation colonies developed in Delhi, Punjab, West Bengal, Rajasthan, and elsewhere.
- Evacuee property laws and land redistribution helped resettle displaced families.

Rebuilding Lives

- Refugees rebuilt livelihoods through agriculture, trade, and entrepreneurship.
- New markets, industries, and educational institutions emerged.
- Communities preserved traditions while adapting to new homes.
- Women, despite immense trauma, played a crucial role in rebuilding families and communities.

Nation-Building Through Resilience

- Displaced communities contributed significantly to India's economic and cultural growth.
- They transformed cities such as Delhi, Amritsar, Ludhiana, Kolkata, Jaipur, and Faridabad.
- Refugees became entrepreneurs, educators, civil servants, artists, scientists, and public leaders.
- Their resilience strengthened the newly independent Republic.

India Post Partition

Major Refugee Camps in India

Relief and Rehabilitation (1947–1950)

Several large refugee camps were established across India after Partition

- **Kingsway Camp, Delhi** – The largest refugee camp in India, sheltering up to 300,000 displaced persons. It became a major centre for relief, registration, and rehabilitation.
- **Purana Qila (Old Fort), Delhi** – One of Delhi's earliest and largest camps. Tens of thousands of refugees, particularly from West Punjab, found temporary shelter within the historic fort.
- **Humayun's Tomb Camp, Delhi** – Used initially to shelter Muslims awaiting migration to Pakistan and later for relief operations during the population exchange.
- **Kurukshetra Refugee Camp, Haryana** – One of the largest transit camps in northern India, at times accommodating lakhs of refugees. It became known for its organized relief efforts, including community kitchens, medical services, and schools.
- **Alwar and Bharatpur Camps (Rajasthan)** – Established to receive refugees arriving from West Punjab and Sindh before their permanent resettlement.
- **Amritsar Transit Camps (Punjab)** – A network of camps received refugees crossing the Attari–Wagah border, providing immediate relief before onward movement.
- **Jalandhar and Ludhiana Camps (Punjab)** – Important rehabilitation centres for displaced persons who later settled across eastern Punjab.

India Post Partition

Refugee Camps in East India



**Cooper's Camp,
Ranaghat**
(West Bengal)

Established in 1950, it became one of the largest camps for refugees from East Pakistan and remained active for decades.

**Dhubulia Camp
Nadia**
(West Bengal)

A major settlement for refugees arriving from East Pakistan during successive migration waves.

**Bongaon and
Bagda Camps**
(West Bengal)

Key reception and transit centres near the India–East Pakistan border.

**Dandakaranya
Rehabilitation
Project**
(from 1958)

Though not a camp in the immediate aftermath of Partition, it was a major rehabilitation programme that resettled thousands of refugee families from East Pakistan in present-day Chhattisgarh, Odisha, and adjoining regions.

India After Partition

Rebuilding Lives

From Refugees to Nation Builders

Despite immense hardship, millions began rebuilding their lives. Refugee camps provided temporary shelter. New townships and settlements emerged across India. Families established homes, businesses and institutions once again.

Resilience and Renewal

Having lost homes, livelihoods and familiar surroundings, millions began life anew. Through hard work and perseverance, displaced communities helped build modern India—establishing businesses, enriching education and public service, contributing to the arts and literature, and strengthening agriculture and commerce. Their resilience transformed personal tragedy into a lasting legacy of nation-building.

**Out of displacement emerged
extraordinary resilience...**

India After Partition

Rebuilding Lives

From Refugees to Nation Builders

The family of Sardar Kartar Singh and Sardarni Gurjeet Kaur settled in Agra after partition, like millions of others who found their footing in a new place, leaving their ancestral places behind.



This is to certify that Shri Kartar Singh son of S.Bhan Singh is a registered and bonafide displaced person from West Pakistan having migrated to India from Montgomery now in West Pakistan.

I know the Kartar Singh
He is a displaced
person and now
living in Agra after
partition

G.H. Shrivastava

Kartar Singh

16/10/67



India After Partition

Dina Nath & Seva Ram

Rebuilding from a Single Receipt

Before Partition, Dina Nath and Seva Ram had transformed a modest bicycle repair shop in Jhelum into a thriving business that imported bicycles from London.

When communal violence forced them to flee from the newly created Pakistan, they left behind their home, business and possessions to avoid attracting looters.

Amid the chaos, Dina Nath carried only a single receipt in his pocket for a consignment of bicycles that was yet to arrive.

Though they lost the enterprise they had painstakingly built, their entrepreneurial spirit endured, symbolizing the resilience of countless refugees who rebuilt their lives from almost nothing after Partition.

India After Partition

Rebuilding Lives

From Refugees to Nation Builders

Born in Daska (now in Pakistan), Raunaq Singh lost his home and business during the Partition of 1947 and arrived in India as a refugee, rebuilding his life from scratch.

After working briefly in a spice shop, he raised capital by selling family jewellery and began trading before entering the steel industry.

He founded Bharat Steel Tubes Ltd., which became one of India's leading steel pipe manufacturers, and later established Apollo Tyres, now a global tyre company.

Beyond business, he served as the first Chairman of Maruti Udyog Ltd. and led premier industry bodies including FICCI and ASSOCHAM, contributing significantly to India's industrial growth.

Raunaq Singh's journey from a displaced refugee to one of India's foremost industrialists symbolises the resilience, enterprise, and nation-building spirit of countless Partition survivors.



India After Partition

The Bahrison's Journey

From Partition to Pages

The story of Bahrison's Booksellers begins in Malakwal, Mandi Bahauddin (now in Pakistan), where the Bahri family lived before the violence of Partition uprooted their lives in 1947. Like millions of others, they arrived in Delhi with little certainty about the future and began again in the refugee settlements of Kingsway Camp. Young Balraj Bahri Malhotra took on every job he could find- selling fountain pens, working on trains, and distributing government publications- to support his family. But his love for books never faded. In 1953, he opened a small bookstore in Khan Market, believing that books could enrich lives even in difficult times. To pay for the shop, his wife, Bhag Malhotra sold off her gold bangles. Over the decades, Bahrison's grew into one of Delhi's most beloved independent bookstores, and today it continues to thrive across the city, run by the next generation of the family, standing as a testament to resilience, hope, and the enduring power of knowledge.



India After Partition

Remembering Partition

Notification

Partition left enduring memories across generations. Oral histories, museums, memorials, literature, films, and archives preserve these experiences.



In 2021, Government of India under the leadership of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi notified 14 August as Partition Horrors Remembrance Day to remind the present and future generations of Indians of the pain and sufferings faced by the people of India during the partition,

“Partition’s pains can never be forgotten. Millions of our sisters and brothers were displaced and many lost their lives due to mindless hate and violence. In memory of the struggles and sacrifices of our people, 14th August will be observed as Partition Horrors Remembrance Day..”

Shri Narendra Modi
Prime Minister

