

Partition: A Catastrophe

Written by Dr. Prakash Jha

Scene: A Community Gathering

[A festive atmosphere, with people singing and celebrating.]

Song: Children, let's celebrate our great nation, India, a land of heroes. Embrace this soil, sacred and pure, Where countless lives were given. India, our motherland, forever to adore.

Song: Children, let's celebrate our great nation, India, a land of heroes. Embrace this soil, sacred and pure, Where countless lives were given. India, our motherland, forever to adore.

Child: Grandpa, listen to everyone singing so beautifully!

Grandpa: Yes, their voices fill my heart with pride. These words, they resonate deep within us.

Child: Why are they singing this song today, Grandpa?

☒ **Grandpa:** They're preparing for the commemorations of August 14th and 15th.

☒ **Child:** I know the 15th is Independence Day, Grandpa. But why do we observe the 14th?

☒ **Grandpa:** The 14th marks Partition catastrophe Remembrance Day. It's a day of remembrance and reflection.

☒ **Child:** Grandpa, what does this "catastrophe of partition" mean?

Grandfather:

Do you not understand the meaning of partition? If you don't understand the meaning of partition, how will you understand the meaning of a catastrophe?

Oh children... our country was once very large. But later, it was partitioned.

Child:

You mean it was divided?

Grandfather:

Yes, it was divided, but there's a difference between dividing and partitioning. Let's say you have ten candies. How would you divide them among yourselves? You'd probably divide them equally, five for each. Now, imagine you have only one candy. What would you do?

Child:

I would break it into two pieces.

Grandfather: *Child... breaking it, shattering it into pieces... that's what partition is. And the pain, the suffering that arises from it, that is a catastrophe.*

Child:

Grandpa, I understand partition now... but this catastrophe... partition... catastrophe...

Grandfather:

Let me explain...

Song:

Come children, let us show you, a glimpse of Hindustan. Touch this soil, this land is of sacrifice. Vande Mataram... Vande Mataram...

Child:

Grandpa, please tell us in detail... how this partition happened.

Grandfather:

Yes I will tell you... about the partition... the partition of our country. Pay attention... listen carefully to the historians' perspective on the partition... pay attention and try to understand. Our country was divided into two parts in the name of religion. Millions of people started to flee from one side to the other. There was chaos everywhere. Millions of people became homeless.

Song:

Where love is the eternal custom... I sing the song of that place. I am a resident of India. I tell the story of India. Where love is the eternal custom.

Narrator 1:

The partition of undivided India is a painful dark history of unprecedented human displacement and forced migration.

Narrator 2:

This was an event where millions of people were searching for new homes in completely opposite circumstances, among strangers.

Narrator 1:

Apart from being a story of a violent division based on faith and religion, it's also a story of..

Narrator 2:

How a lifestyle and an era of coexistence for many years ended abruptly and dramatically.

Narrator 1:

Approximately 6 million Hindus, Sikhs, and people from other communities left the areas that later became West Pakistan.

Narrator 2:

6.5 million Muslims left Punjab, Delhi, and many parts of India for West Pakistan.

Narrator 1:

2 million Hindus and people from other communities left East Bengal, which later became East Pakistan, and came to West Bengal.

Narrator 2:

In 1950, another 2 million Hindus and people from other communities came to West Bengal.

Narrator 1:

1 million Muslims left West Bengal for East Pakistan.

Narrator 2:

The death toll in this catastrophe is said to be around 500,000.

Narrator 1:

But the estimated figure is between five ten lakh.

Narrator 2:

It's said that this partition probably resulted in the largest number of killings in the name of religion after World War II.

Narrator 1:

Centuries-old social fabric and beliefs were broken.

Song:

These tears of pain flowing from my eyes... Life lost, friends lost...

Child:

Grandpa, their homes, their everything were taken away from them. I'm scared just listening to it.

Grandfather:

It's natural to be scared, child. Imagine the plight of those who were there at that time.

Child:

Grandpa, there must have been children like me there. What must have they faced?

Grandfather:

Yes, there were millions of children like you who saw that scene with their own eyes and still shudder when they recall it.

Child:

Please tell us more, Grandpa.

Grandfather:

I will. So listen.

Song:

Look at Bengal here, every inch is green. Every child here is ready to die for their country.

Children, let's celebrate our great nation, India, a land of heroes. Embrace this soil, sacred and pure, Where countless lives were given. India, our motherland, forever to adore.

Teacher:

Sit down.

Students:

Good morning, sir.

Teacher:

Good morning.

Students:

Sir, a request. You were telling us about the partition. You said we lost a lot. Now tell us what happened after the partition.

Teacher:

On February 20, 1947, British Prime Minister Clement Attlee announced in the House of Commons...

Student: Sir, please let me tell the rest... I know about it.

Teacher: Yes, go ahead.

Student 1: So, friends... before June 30, 1948, the government...

Teacher: Poonam, not from there. Come here and tell everyone.

Student 2: Yessir. Sofriends, before June 30, 1948, the government decided to transfer power and leave India.

Student 3: Sir, I...

Teacher: Yes, go ahead.

Student 4: Although, due to Lord Mountbatten, the entire process was completed a year earlier.

Student 5: Yes, sir. Lord Mountbatten returned to New Delhi on May 31, 1947, with the approval of the transfer of power from London.

Student 6: I also remember... in the historic meeting of June 2, 1947, there was a broad consensus on the partition plan.

Student 7: Yes, sir. The decision to partition of India was a precondition, even though There was widespread opposition for the plan of dividing a country like India on religious grounds.

Student 1: It is said that only those leaders were mentally prepared for this partition who saw their own interest and bright future in this partition.

Teacher: Wow, children, you all have so much information. Let's start the next class, but before that, let's take a short break.

Students: ok si

Vande matramvandematram...

Speaker A: Hey, what do you think about the partition?

Speaker B: I think encouraging the partition would improve society. Different communities would get their own rights.

Speaker A: No, no. That's not true at all. Unity is what makes a society develop. We should all come together and progress towards prosperity.

Speaker B: Your points are good, but the reality is that everything is possible only through partition.

Speaker A: No, no... We should all work together to take our country on the path of progress. And we should eradicate the horrors of partition.

Speaker B: What do you think... can we all collectively take on this message?

Speaker A: Why not? For this, we all have to stay united, and this unity is our heritage. We must cherish it.

Speaker B: Okay, but tell me what else happened during the partition of undivided India?

Speaker A: Only those who experienced it can tell you that.

Vande matram, vandematram.....

Students: good afternoon sir,

Teacher: Good afternoon... Sit down... So, let's move on... ,A meeting of All India Muslim League was held at the Imperial Hotel in New Delhi on June 9, 1947.

Student (I): Because of the inability or inappropriate ambitions of the Congress and many leaders at that time along with the Muslim League, this step could not be strongly opposed. The result of the conflict between Congress leader Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Muslim League's Jinnah was that the country had to suffer the partition.

Student (I):ok... Sir... Sir... I know what happened next...

Teacher: Oh, Poonam, you know everything... Anyway, knowledge grows by sharing... please share.

Student (I): Friends, a proposal demanding partition was passed there almost unanimously.

Student : In which 300 votes were in favor and only 10 against.

Student : And just like that, India and Pakistan were divided into two parts.

Student : Based on religion, the eastern part of Bengal was also divided and assimilated to Pakistan.

Grandfather: The widespread and cruel communal violence that took place in various parts of India in 1946 and 1947 has been written about in detail in many books. It was March 4, 1947. The police opened fire on a procession of Hindus and Sikhs.

Narrator 2: By morning of March 6th, all cities of Punjab, including Amritsar, Jalandhar, Rawalpindi, Multan, and Sialkot, were engulfed in the flames of riots.

Narrator 1: Compared to Punjab, the displacement and resettlement that continued for decades in Bengal had a completely different form.

Narrator 2: The people of Bengal were very unfortunate.

Narrator 1: Why?

Narrator 2: Because the people of Bengal had to face displacement twice.

Narrator 1: Twice?

Narrator 2: Yes, twice.

Narrator 1: First, they all had to leave their homes and go to East Pakistan.

Narrator 2: Then they had to flee from there and come to West Bengal.

Narrator 2: Brother, the authorities there underestimated the severity of the crisis caused by the partition.

Narrator 1: Thousands of Hindu families fled from Dhaka and its surroundings and reached Sealdah.

Narrator 2: They didn't reach so easily. Women were robbed of their belongings on the way. They were tormented in various ways.

Narrator 1: Women, children, and the elderly were treated inhumanely.

Narrator 2: Whether it was women, children, or the elderly, everyone was mistreated.

Narrator 1: Yes, it's true. Women suffered greatly during the partition.

Narrator 2: Millions of families were separated from their loved ones.

Narrator 1: Not only that, people boarded trains alive, but they arrived here as pile of corpses.

[A child starts crying]

Grandfather: Don't cry... Be quiet...

Child: Grandfather... What happened to those people who came from Dhaka? Whose everything was looted

Grandfather: It's a strange story, child. As they say, neither at home nor on the shore.

Child: Why is that?

Grandfather: When they left their homes and came back to this country, they became refugees in their own homes.

Song: Tears flow from the eyes, these painful currents. Life has ended, friends have been lost.

Character 3: So many people came to Bengal from East Pakistan that there wasn't an inch of space left in anyone's house to accommodate their relatives.

Character 4: The West Bengal government arranged fifteen steamers to bring refugees from Chittagong, Narayanganj, Barisal, and Chandpur to Calcutta.

Character 3: People had fled East Pakistan by waterway. Many boats sank. After a few days, only corpses were floating on the water surface.

Character 3 & 4: What was so special about the land of our share? For which we lost everything.

Character 3: Bengal, Punjab, Gujarat, Sindh, the fire of partition raged everywhere.

Character 4: The people of Sindh were displaced and came here, but we didn't get Sindh.

Narrator 1: Speaking of Sindh, most Sindhi families came to Rajasthan.

[As a Sindhi family]

Sindhi Man: After the partition, millions of refugees came to India from Pakistan, and Rajasthan was one of the states where a large number of refugees came.

Sindhi Woman:for refugees like us arranging relief and rehabilitation in Rajasthan was a big challenge.

Sindhi Man: With our arrival, the cultural fabric of Rajasthan also changed. We started to look different. Our culture, language, and customs all changed.

Sindhi Woman: In Sindh, I had a big business. Here, I couldn't even provide two square meals for my children.

Sindhi Man: All my shops and house were looted.

Sindhi Woman:

"How can we forget that night, my child? When I fled with our children in my arms."

Sindhi Man:

fleeing, we somehow reached a distant relative's place in Bikaner, Rajasthan."

Sindhi Woman:

"Many of our relatives were scattered along the way. We haven't seen them since. Some ended up in Jhunjhunu."

Sindhi Woman:

"How long could they keep us? In the end, we had to come to a refugee camp. Who understands better than us, how a happy family, a village, a city can be destroyed?"

Child:

"People from Pakistan fled towards Jammu & Kashmir, Punjab, Gujarat, Bengal, Rajasthan in millions"

Both the elderly couple break down and weep.

Song:

Tears stream from our eyes, these painful currents. A life broken, lost companions.

Child:

"Grandfather, I can't listen to it anymore..."

Grandfather:

Yes, my child... This dark chapter of our nation's history is so painful that no one can bear to hear it. It's a heart-wrenching event... you are just a child, hearing this even a stone-hearted person would have a change of heart, ... Now, I will tell you something that we must do now.

Narrator 1 & 2:

Where every morning used to dawn with smiles... The sight there turned even tears into blood...

Characters 3 & 4:

Their pain of your weight on the shoulders is not much... When weighed against fear, war, and cruelty...

Character 1:

I offer my deepest respects to millions of Indians who lost their lives in the catastrophe of Partition and suffered the pain of displacement.

Character 2:

To safeguard the unity and integrity of India, we all must learn to strive together.

Character 3:

In the political game of Partition, poison was instilled in the minds of one brother against another.

Character 4:

Because of this poison, humans cut down humans, humans divided humans, humans lost humans. And our undivided India was divided.

Grandfather: let bygones be bygones, let's listen to what our esteemed prime minister has to say.

PM's voice

"The pain of the country's partition can never be forgotten. Due to hatred and violence, lakhs of our sisters and brothers were displaced, and many even lost their lives. In memory of the struggle and sacrifice of those people, we have decided to observe 14th August as 'VibhajanVibhishika Diwas'

Character 1:

"If anyone among us tries to deceive us based on religion or caste, or if anyone tries to mislead us, we must not be swayed."

All:

"We must not be swayed."

Character 1:

"We must keep India united."

All:

"We must keep India united."

Character 4:

"We will not fall for any political trickery now."

All:

"We will not fall for any political trickery now."

Character 4:

"With unity and focus, peace and prosperity, we will develop our Mother India

All:

"We will develop our Mother India."

All:

"Come, let us all vow..."

All:

"Victory to Mother India! Victory to Mother India!"

Song:

"Vande Mataram... Vande Mataram..." (Glory to Mother India)