

Col. Muhammed Hafeez

INTERVIEWER: I'm doing an internship for Harvard University and they want to collect stories about partition. Can you tell me what you went through, or what your parents and elders experienced?

Ans: The partition happened in 1947, and I was in 6th grade at that time. O remembers we had our summer vacations, as it happened on 14 August. I belong to Bahawalnagar district, which is very close to India. Across the border there is a state known as Bikaner state, where there were Indians and Sikhs. In my village an incident happened in 1945, which I vividly remember despite my young age. It was Eid and after sacrificing a cow, Muslims took the meat in the chowk, where our house was. They wanted to sale it. When they brought it there, the Hindus and Sikhs attacked, that destroy this meat we won't let you eat it. It happened right outside my house, and my brave father, who had been living here after migrating from Gujranwala 2 years before partition, stood up against them and said we will not waste this meat, but eat it. He asked neighbouring villagers, mostly Muslims, and asked them to come and fight because their honour was at stake. They brought their swords and spears, because people didn't use guns at that time. They chanted the Naara Taqbeer and gathered around the village. When the Sikh found out they ran away. After this instance the government decided that you can sacrifice animals, even the cow they worshipped. However, to sell it, it should be inside a covered basket. I remember every year a police contingent would then come and provide security to ensure such an incident doesn't repeat itself.

However, on 15 August when we woke up, the Sikhs and Hindus had emptied their houses. They had gotten the news that partition had happened. We then saw the people that came. In our village people didn't come on trains, because they were far away, but on carts, in poor condition, some without shoes and proper clothes. Then in the village people were assigned to help find them places to live and essentials like bedding food and clothes. And this is how they settled. The property and land left behind by Hindus and Sikhs was allotted to these refugees. It took a couple of years for them to settle down. The government made a rehabilitation body to help them settle, and a committee to find the abducted women a lot of people were murdered and kidnaped on their way over. Girls were taken and raped or killed. A lot of massacres happened. Yet eventually everything settled down and Pakistan was made.

But why was Pakistan made? The main reason was the difference in religion, us worshipping the creator while they worshipped their gods, in different ways. Our ways of living, customs and traditions were entirely different. But another difference was that they were in majority, and thus they dominated everywhere, with Muslims getting very less chances to promote their rights, for education, living and jobs. So Muslims were under depression. The cultures were

completely opposite, and this was the main cause of partition. Quaid-e-Azam and his fellows fought for 30-40 years against the Indians and British, Lord Mount Batton and the others. He had a principal of being to the point, honest and sticking to his word. His politics was the best in the world. The Hindus on the other hand were the complete opposite, and their policies included deceiving, cheating and lying, and even in the partition they did the same. Kashmir and its attached districts, Gurdaspur, Hushyarpur, and Jalandhar were all part of Punjab, but at the 11 hour they somehow took them away from us, and we're still struggling for it.

Even once it was made; people had to struggle a lot, to settle in different areas allotting property. And at that time our Chaudhary's had a negative role to play when they deceived and took more land for themselves unjustly, while giving the refugees less. The refugees weren't given their rights regardless of having claims over that land. And since then the dishonest life of style has become a characteristic of our life. In the past we had a simple life, spending less, earning less and living in peace. But after partition politics, accompanied by negative things came. Our living, income changed and honesty decreased.

When we weren't even properly settled the 1965 war took place, and we faced a lot of losses. Then we got new rulers like Bhutto, who further destroyed the political atmosphere, and negative qualities increased, while so did getting money from unfair means. These germs keep spreading and nourishing. My own life is in peace, but barely anyone else has that because everyone's in a race. Currently even our country is in a bad position, with leaders in jail and various cases on them. The main reason for all of this is greed and dishonesty. If we can somehow control this our country has everything, with all types of weather, land, sea, rivers, deserts, mountains, various types of fruit. Our country is a gifted place.

INTERVIEWER: You told me you were in 6th grade. So, did your school shut down?

At that time, we had our summer break. When school opened, all my Indian and Sikh colleagues had gone, and we found out they had gone because of partition. We were then just Muslims and got along well, with a spirit of competition. [The interviewee then reminisced about his school achievements].

INTERVIEWER: Were there any health issues and hospitals?

There were very few hospitals at that time and a small population. People also got sick less due to various reasons. They ate pure, exercised a lot, travelled on foot and cycle. I never took medicines, any fever or flu. We ate pure stuff and lived together in peace. For example, if a relatively lesser person was getting their daughter married, everyone helped. [Interviewee reminisces again].

Today's generation doesn't have the courage and willpower we had. We improved in gaining knowledge, but got left behind in improving characteristics.

INTERVIEWER: what do you know about camps?

There were tents set up in cities. I used to be in a village, and here people settled into empty houses. They were donated the necessities to help them settle.

The interviewee consented for using his stories and direct quotes