

Daisy Michael

QUESTIONS: 1947 PARTITION OF BRITISH INDIA: PARTITION STORIES

Before

Partition

1. Describe life before Partition. Where were you before Partition happened? What were you doing? What were things like? What was the feeling then? (Your feelings, general atmosphere.)

I was not born at that time but my mother used to tell us about many of our relatives and friends who were parted from their families during the partition.

During Partition

2. When and how did you learn about Partition? Please tell us about your experience: What happened during Partition? Where were you when Partition happened? Did you stay where you were or did you have to leave?

No our family was already from and in Pakistan but as I mentioned a lot of relatives parted during the partition. We had no urge to move to India. My maternal grandfather (Nana) was named Samuel Joseph and was a Catholic Catechist, as well as, a Merchant of mangoes. The Convent nuns had orchids and he also looked after that. This was Khushpur St Dominic Convent in Punjab owned by Belgians.

Migration

If you *migrated*:

3a. Where did you leave from/to? Which towns did you cross or stay in? How was the decision to leave reached?

3b. Who did you travel with? What method(s) of transportation did you take? Did people in your area leave? Who left, who stayed back?

3c. What did you take with you and why? What did you end up with? What happened on the journey?

If you *did not migrate*:

3a. Please describe how it was decided to stay. Where did you stay? Who did you stay with?

Because we were happy with life here, we decided to stay. There was no religious discrimination. In the village, everyone had equal opportunities unlike today when things have worsen. At the time of partition, my mother was with her mother, who was called



Hari. The atmosphere was very good. We didn't have any Muslims in our village. There a few with many Hindus and Sikhs in the surrounding villages. It was a Christian village. Hence, it was a Christian dominant area where you could hear Church bells ringing so loud. Like many other Christian-Catholic missionary established villages like Clarkabad, Mariamabad, Shurkoat (previously called Francisabad), Khushpur was also set up by Catholic friars.

3b. Did you interact with migrants? How?

No, not directly but later on I met 'Kamini Banner Ji' (that was her name), who became my eldest sister's friend. We met her years after our partition during our early teaching career. There were one of the most richest people of their times.

Refugee Camps

4. Were you at a refugee camp (at any point on the journey)?

My mother tells us the first train stopped at Walton – the spot today is called Baba-e-Pakistan. There were many camps here.

Unlike main stations, the things were as usual in our village. Truth is many people from the other three religions converted to Christianity although due to extremism these days no one wants to tell. Also, many people from both sides of the border crossed over wearing the Crucifix to disguise themselves for security purposes only.

If yes, then: 4a. Where was the camp? (Location)

4b. When were you there? (If you don't remember exact dates, try to remember season, recent events, or year.)

4c. How long were you there? How did you decide to leave the camp?

4d. How many people were there?

4e. Describe life at the camp. (Food, water, medicine/medical care, sanitation, activities at the camp, work/money, registration, deaths.)

4f. Was there any temporary education center? Did you study there? Do you have any certificate?

Health

5. Could you tell us what kind of diseases or illnesses were common at the time of Partition?

6. Did you, or anyone you know of, experience any health-related issues during Partition (for e.g. diseases, injuries, or mental illnesses)? If yes, did you get any help to deal with those issues during that time? Who provided help?



What we heard of from our elders was that many people suffered mental issues like chronic depression and insanity.

Education

7. What was the impact of Partition on your education? Did you change your stream? Could you tell us if you missed school/ college, and if yes, for how long?

No, as Khushpur was mainly dominated by Catholic missionaries! Plus, their education was almost completed. My mother had completed her JV – a teaching training course like PTC.

Livelihood/ Profession

8. How did the Partition impact your livelihood/ professional life?

I know of a Sikh shopkeeper whose shop was in the village Mariamabad – a family pilgrimage spot and a Christian village. That's where my paternal side of family lived too. He had to leave his shop with paternal grandfather – Dada while visiting some relatives in India. They wanted to stay in Pakistan and just before partition went to the Indian side of the Sub-continent for a day or two. During the course, riots broke out and we never saw, or heard from or of them again. Not only the shop but their home was left here with all their memoirs and possessions. Maybe they tried coming back but were killed! Their house, however, was in neighboring village as Mariamabad was Catholics village looked over by Belgian Capuchin priest, Fr Gido. Their house must have been looted or taken over by someone.

Response of the Government and Civil Society

9. How did the government and/or civil society in the new countries respond to the Partition? What do you think they did well and where did they falter? Do you remember any other individuals that were active during that time?

Missionaries played a significant role. There were camps of all sorts. The 'Tar Ghar Sisters' (Nuns of the Scared Convent) were very active in first aid and other services. The biggest medical camp was at UCH – United Christian Hospital Lahore.

10. What do you remember about the role of the police and military during the Partition?

No. Don't know anything.



After Partition

11 What was it like after Partition? Was life any different than it was before Partition happened? (Did you undergo any lifestyle changes as a result of Partition? For example: change schools, eat different foods, aspects of daily life and care, etc.)

My mother says that during the British rule there was safety and protection as they would even wear jewellery in everyday life. No one would dare look at a women or tease etc. In Khushpur, women would load themselves in gold when going to Church. There was a tradition that if a daughter-in-law wore lots of gold, it meant she was married in a rich family.

12. How do you feel about the decision of Partition? Is that any different than how you felt in 1947-8?

One of my mother's brother (my Mamu) name Gabriel and a cousin of Uncle Gabriel went to Amritsar with friends. In those days, it was like going for hang out with friends at shopping mall or a place of entertainment. Frankly speaking, no one expected that the partition will turn out to be chaotic, or let's say horrific. In fact, I think most people from our community were so naïve they thought maybe the partition wasn't even possible. Uncle Gabriel was very young – maybe in early 20s. So he was on the other side of the border when partition broke out. Somehow, he got separated from his group. He was captured but later released as he was given the option to join the Indian Army. Since Uncle Gabriel had no choice, he joined the Indian Army and because of that he could never return to Pakistan again. On the other hand, my mother's eldest brother name John had joined Pakistan Army. Because of this, both brother could never meet each other again.

My mother's mother – my Nani (maternal grandmother) was so heartbroken and she waited her entire life to reunite with him. However, many years later perhaps some time in late 60s I think when she had grown very old, my Mamu's wife – an Indian Christian and his children visited her. Uncle Gabriel still couldn't come to Pakistan. My Nani told my Mamu's wife, "Meri Poat Abhi Bhi Jal Rahi Hai!" – meaning my heart/womb is still burning ☹

Uncle Gabriel only visited maybe once or twice but that was after my Nani passed away. This was sometime in late 70s when late President Butto gave permission for cross border visit.

The fact that both sons of my Nani were in the army send shiver through our spine. Both fought each other in the wars of 1965 and 1971 – one from Indian Army and the other from Pakistan Army.



13. Have you been, or are you, in touch (present or in past) with anyone from your birth place/ location before Partition? Would you like to share anything about that communication?

After partition, we lost all the contacts gradually. My eldest Mamu name John, as I mentioned earlier, joined the Pakistan Army. His daughter named Stella, who is a Catholic missionary went to Italy with a sponsored group to become a doctor. However, instead she became a Catholic missionary and over the years sometime in the 1960s she was able to locate and contact Uncle Gabriel. This is how we were able to learn about what happened to Uncle Gabriel. Still, my Nani and my mother's family was never able to directly get in touch with him.

14. Can you share any photographs or memorabilia with us from the time of Partition?

15. Have you been interviewed before? If yes, by whom?

No

AFTER COMPLETING THE INTERVIEW, PLEASE CIRCLE ALL THAT APPLY

Permission to use your name, first name (or initials) in our study. Name

Daisy Michael First name **Ms Daisy** Initials **D.M**

Permission to use quotes/excerpts from this interview. **Yes** Name **Daisy Michael** Short name Anonymous

Permission to use age, location during Partition, audio (name as above). Age **Yes** Location **Yes** Audio **Yes**

Permission for the information above to be included on the Harvard **Yes (grant permission)** No (research only)

South Asia Institute website devoted to the research

