

Dr. Muhammad Rafi

Interviewer: do I have your consent to give any information you give me to the harvard south asia archives

Dr Rafi: yes, you can

Interviewer: any names, any quotes, any information you provide in this interview.

Dr Rafi: yes, you can use it.

Interviewer: can you tell me how your life was like before the partition?

Dr Rafi: everything was very calm and quiet. I was a small child, going to school, coming back and nothing much was going on. 1943, 44, 45 was very routine life. Going to school, coming back from school then playing at home and the same thing for next day. We were 4 brothers and cousins; we used to play together so nothing special was going on.

Interviewer: where were you before the partition happened?

Dr Rafi: I was in Gujarat city 70 miles from Lahore.

Interviewer: what were things like? How was the general atmosphere?

Dr Rafi: It was very quiet and calm. Nothing emergent was being felt. However in the later years, you can say 1946 1947, the activity was more visible through newspapers because at that stage there were a lot of processions and meetings of various people. That made it apparent that something was going on

Interviewer: how were your interactions with the non Muslims before the partition happened?

Dr Rafi: In Gujarat, all the people were living very comfortably, Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims. There were no problems at all. We had a small Hindu and Sikh population but they were all living very nicely and happily.

Interviewer: how did you learn about the partition?

Dr Rafi: when I became a bit more mature, maybe I reached 4th or 5th grade. So 1944 or 1945 I became aware of the partition.

Interviewer: please tell us about your experience during the partition.

Dr Rafi: In Gujarat, there was nothing special. At one stage which was after 1947 when Pakistan had already been declared. There were massacres in Indian part and the trains were burnt and the people in the trains were massacred. When that news came, people in Gujarat took some action, which I did not like and very sadly they burned a few residences and they also killed some Hindus which were travelling in a train. So that's a bad part of the partition which I noticed in Gujarat.

Interviewer: did you stay where you were or did you have to leave.

Dr Rafi: That was our only place to live because our father was in London for world war 2. So that was the only place my family could live.

Interviewer: how was it decided that you will stay? Where exactly did you stay?

Dr Rafi: we stayed in our grandfather's house. It was a very big house which could accommodate 3 or 4 families. So there was no other choice but to stay as it was very safe and comfortable. We were going to school and all. We were waiting for our father to come and to shift with him to any place he's transferred to.

Interviewer: who did you stay with?

Dr Rafi: at Gujarat in that house there were 2 families. Our family, my mother and brothers and sisters was one family and the other was our cousin's family. They were again a mother and 3 boys. So the 2 families were staying there. Our cousin's father was usually at his job in mangala rasul. My father was in London. Anyways we used to live very comfortably and there were no problems at all.

Interviewer: Did you interact with any migrants and how?

Dr Rafi: on one of the jummah prayers (Friday prayer). I went to GT road mosque, the big mosque of Gujarat. The people started standing up and looking around. Everybody asked them "what are you doing" they said "look migrants". This was the first indication that migrants are coming and that they have reached Gujarat. I could not see any migrant on that jummah prayer but we got a good idea that people are coming and that evening we went again and then we saw ox carts full of people are coming. Some are on foot, some are on ox carts ,some were staying in Gujarat, others were moving away from Gujarat forward. So that gave us the idea that migrants were coming. One of our very active freelancer, helper, he went to the sanatan darhm high school and he started the first high school and by luck I was there to witness the first kitchen being made. He picked up some bricks. He got some daigs(big pots for cooking). He got rice from the town. So he started to cook the rice. After that I came back to my house. The next day we decided to help the camp people(migrants). So the next day me my brother and 2 cousins went to the muhajar camp(refugee camp) and asked the manager "can we join". He said "you can join". On that day we worked from morning to 11 o'clock night and this routine went on till September. Basically we used to make permits for people and put their names on it so that they could use them to get accommodation and food. That was all that we used to do. In winter when the weather became very cold we used to distribute blankets and quilts. It became very cold in September and then we gave it up.

Interviewer: when did you start to go? In which month?

Dr Rafi: July till September

Interviewer: where was this camp located?

Dr Rafi: This camp was located in the sanatana darhm high school which was on the left side of GT road. It was previously being used by Hindus. It was a very extensive school with a lot of open ground so they thought it was a very suitable place for the muhajar camp (refugee camp). They used it for a very good purpose.

Interviewer: how many people were at the camp?

Dr Rafi: I don't know the exact number but maybe 2000. What happened was that migrants were coming daily on ox carts and on feet as well. Some were staying in the camp and some were moving forward after time so it wasn't a static camp, people were coming and going .

Interviewer: Can you describe life at the camp. The food, the water, the medicine, sanitation even activities or deaths at the camp.

Dr Rafi: food and accommodation were very adequately given. I did not see any problems with health because I told you I was too busy doing permit work in my office. I did not get much chance to see; especially I did not try to see. I think as the place was very open, the cook at night had used the ground for his washroom needs because there were no specially built toilets

Interviewer: so at the camp was there any temporary education facility

Dr Rafi: no, not at all

Interviewer: could you tell us what kind of diseases and illnesses were common at the time of the partition

Dr Rafi: among the refugees, I did not see any visible diseases or any big problems. The town at that time was relatively disease free in those days not like now, maybe It was due to a healthy diet or fresh air. I can't say exactly.

Interviewer: did you or anyone you know experience any health related issues, psychological, emotional or physical.

Dr Rafi: no, I did not. I did not notice. Ill tell you one thing which was quite interesting, one of my cousins was senior to us and when he was at camp he noticed a family who he thought should not be in the camp. He thought that they are well educated and should not be there so he brought the family to our house as guests and told them they could love with us as long as they wanted to but after 2 days they wanted us to arrange a house for them and for their accommodation we went to the department who were in the capacity to allot houses left by the Hindus. So we took them to the officer and he selected a house they could occupy. They only stayed for one night there as it was a single house in many abandoned houses

Interviewer: why did they leave?

Dr Rafi: it was a deserted place. After one week, another family was brought to our house by our cousin. Again they lived with us for 2 weeks and then we arranged accommodation for

them. Luckily this was in a Muslim area and we went with the people of concern and broke the lock of the Hindu house. That Hindu house was unused for 30 or 40 years so we cleaned the house and then brought them in and they lived there for 30 or 40 years

Interviewer: did you see any psychological effects on the refugees

Dr Rafi: I could not notice any because at my age they are difficult to see

Interviewer: what was the impact of the partition on your education?

Dr Rafi: luckily, my education was not disturbed because in Gujarat I had uninterrupted 6th grade and then my father came back from London to Lahore. Then we shifted from Gujarat to Lahore so we had no problem

Interviewer: did you miss any school or college days

Dr Rafi: no, I did not.

Interviewer: how did the partition affect your family's livelihood?

Dr Rafi: My father as he was in the army and was a doctor, when the partition was going on, they transferred him to Ambala which was in India so he must have tried a lot to not go to Ambala because in the next few months there was partition but he managed (to come to Lahore) by consulting and telling his officers.

Interviewer: So instead of Ambala, he came to Lahore

Dr Rafi: yes

Interviewer: can you tell me how the government and the civil society responded to the partition.

Dr Rafi: because of my age I cannot give you this information.

Interviewer: do you remember the role of the police or the military

Dr Rafi: I think police was doing its job, but nothing important.

Interviewer: what was it like after the partition? Was life any different compared to before the partition

Dr Rafi: after the partition, everybody noticed that people who had left their houses were eager to get some accommodation to live so they wanted an area to live. So there were struggles going on "I want this place" "I want that place" and then there was the department which managed to provide the equivalent of the property they had left.

Interviewer: did you undergo any lifestyle changes as a result of the partition. Changes in food, schools, your daily life

Dr Rafi: no

Interviewer: how do you feel about the decision of the partition and was that any different from what you felt in 1947

Dr Rafi: again I can't comment

Interviewer: what do you feel right now about the partition?

Dr Rafi: the very basic point of the partition was that there are 2 different nations; Muslims and Hindus. They had different lifestyles, background, different histories and they could live better separately. That was the story and our leaders had really thought a lot about how to build Pakistan. Everybody knows thoughts of Mr. Jinnah as well. Those goals of course have not been achieved; the governments that came after did not keep in mind what had to be done. This was a big defect and everybody can notice now that we are no where near what we had thought.

Interviewer: so do you agree with the decision or do you not. Or is it in the middle

Dr Rafi: I agree because there has been a definite partition and now you can say what you want to say and do what you want to do. So we should have done this.

Interviewer: have you been or are you in touch right now or in the not so distant past with anyone from your birth place or the location you stayed before the partition

Dr Rafi: my friends and relatives, well I do see them but nothing special regarding them.

Interviewer: can you share any photographs or memorabilia with us from the time of partition.

Dr Rafi: no, I don't have. I have two photographs of the family but they are very unimportant.

Interviewer: have you been interviewed before.

Dr Rafi: yes by the museum.

Interviewer: have you been interviewed by the Harvard project?

Dr Rafi: no.

Interviewer: do I have your permission to use your name, any quotes, your age, location during partition, any audio, any information you have given in this interview, can I give all of these to the Harvard archive?

Dr Rafi: oh yes

Interviewer: thank you, can you tell me your full name.

Dr Rafi: Muhammad Rafi

Interviewer: your age during the partition?

Dr Rafi: I was born in 1934 so I was 13 years old at the time of the partition. August 1934 to august 1947 so I was 13 years at the time of the partition.

Interviewer: thank you very much.