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## **Re-examining the events of Midnight Furies: Reflection of partitioned lives by Nisid Hazari**

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### **Abstract:**

*Partition, of 1947, between India and Pakistan, depicts the massive bloodshed, brutality, and inhumane actions whose results were wrongly anticipated even by the political actors of that time. Like many historians, writers and researchers penned down it as with the fact that riots of 1946 in Calcutta acts as the forerunner of a year later failed talks between lunatic personalities (for power) of Indian Independence history ends with the partition. Several historical archives appositely recount the events of tragedy, trauma, and resistance of the innocents who are merely victims of the obsessive leadership of Jinnah and Nehru, Nehru and Patel, and the imperative but unworthy presence and hastily response of Mountbatten and Gandhi. Partition is responsible for hundreds and thousands of deaths and millions of displaced. It reflects the separation of territory, new states, and distressing memories. The contestation, which actually begins with the mad race for administrative power, ended up with the much destructible outcome for harmony, peace, and uniformity among the culture of the masses. This expects the unexpected shifts to fuel today's dangerous and widely hatred sensation towards each other, which could be found in the form of terrorism and mad race for nuclear proliferation.*

**Keywords:** - bloodshed, tragedy, trauma, terror, and nuclear proliferation.

Partition has many narratives that have discussed factual realities, including thousands of deaths, millions of displaced lives, bloodshed eyes, lost cultures and broken dreams. Partition also laid endless distressing memories and trauma. Partition of 1947, between India and Pakistan, engulfed the distance between the two parts of the country. Meanwhile, this also brings the bifurcated relation within individuals' lives and cultures. It was hard to believe the partition of that nation who had shared common symbols, tradition, culture, ideas and now bifurcated so effortlessly<sup>1</sup>. The partition substantially impacted creating a new separate identity after losing the existing common one for India and Pakistan. It was a matter of the fact that partition was, simply, the outcome of deep distress, contestation, and much-awaited demand by those who had no idea what they were doing at that time. The partitioned lives of the two bifurcated nations were captured between the two-opposed nationalisms, and their identity settled as Indian or Pakistani.<sup>2</sup>

Today, in India, we are well settled with the endless autonomy voices against the unification and integrity of the nation in the name of 'States Re-organisation', 'demand for statehood' and many more, then why it was still an un-digestive matter when Jinnah raised a call. However, it was lunatic for the autonomy and welfare of its own community, i.e., Muslims, against the discriminatory behaviour of Congress and its leadership. Even Nisid Hazari, in his *Midnight Furies*, while discussing the trauma and torture of during partition, also covers the aftermaths of partition. He also critically examines the Gandhian role in every Hindu- Muslim communal riots where it was found that he, too, had many dodges in his non-violent policies. Like many scholars, historians merely penned the partition history as the 'handiwork of the British empire'. Both ends accepted the proposal of partition, which had established their roots purely based on different ideologies. The partition also enlightened the clandestine fear of both communities, which takes the form of 'frictions' and subsequently ends in separation.<sup>3</sup>

### **Where the minds work for... 'Partition'.**

Much ink has been flown on the paper while describing the painful events of partition in poetry, memoirs, autobiography, and recorded documents. Togetherly, they shared one thing whosoever tasted the victory; actually, it was only humanity who lost everything. Examining the historical events that led to partition raised many questions over the pre-condition and, significantly, on those

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<sup>1</sup> V. Pala Prasada Rao, K. Nirupa Rani and Digumarti Bhaskara Rao (ed.), *India-Pakistan: Partition Perspectives in Indo- English Novels*, Discovery Publishing House, New Delhi, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Yasmeen Khan, *The Great Partition: The Making of India and Pakistan*, Yale University Press, London, p. 10.

<sup>3</sup> Khwaja A. Khalique, 'Genesis of Partition', in *Pangs of Partition: The Parting of Ways*, Vol. I, (ed.) by S. Settar and Indira Baptista Gupta, Manohar, 2002, p. 113-114.

'minds' associated with the preludes of partition. Based on this rationale, the partition becomes the synonym of horror! While explaining the same Nisid Hajari states:

“...Instead of joining hand at their twinned births, India and Pakistan would be engulfed by some of the worst sectarian-massacres.... partition is a horrific memory for millions- ... What truly continues to haunt today's world are the furies that were unloosed in 1947- the fears and suspicions and hatred forged in partition's searing crucible...Leaders... mutual mistrust and scheming for advantage quickly brought their infant nations to the brink of war, and the ignited shadow contests for control over the kingdoms of Hyderabad in the south and Kashmir in the north”<sup>4</sup>.

Admittedly, the historians partially discussed that Congress and the Congressman were equal to Jinnah, who was responsible for partition. Notwithstanding, if the Muslims was against Congress's domination of minorities, then, on the other hand, Congress, too, were so crooked and well-planned not to work with League's member.<sup>5</sup> Because of this intensely opposed ideology, the dream of a unified India becomes a distant dream. The call for 'Direct Action' by Jinnah and his lunatic followers made the situation even more pathetic for those struggling efforts of re-settling peace and harmony. It was a different side of the story that neither Jinnah, the sole spokesman, nor the Huseyn Suhrawardy, Muslim Premier of Bengal, “specified exactly what he meant”<sup>6</sup> from their call to 'Direct Action'. Subsequently, the narratives from Garhmukteshwar were painful, and humanity was a shame, too. Around 8000 Muslims were massacred by Hindu rebellions, and many Muslims were displaced from there. According to Lt. Gen. Sir Francis Tucker<sup>7</sup>, *While Memory Serves: the story of the Last Two Years of British Rule in India*, narrative some un-investigated part of Garhmukteshwar's pogroms.

Dr B. R. Ambedkar, in his seminal work, “*Pakistan or The Partition of India (1945)*”, examined the reason that what made them cry for the partition of the nation. For him, these reasons were, merely, the pretexts to hide the clandestine nature of partition. There are end number of Muslims who lived under the rule of the Hindu ruler and certainly have had no objection. He also criticized the League's claim of Hindus who were in the majority of Muslims who were in the minority. He criticized both the Muslim League and Congress at that time led under Hindu organizations. One

<sup>4</sup> Nisid Hajari, *Midnight Furies: The Deadly legacy of India's Partition*, Penguin books, Delhi, 2015, pp. xvi- xvii.

<sup>5</sup> It was widely noticed that Congress leaders who were not even interested to work with Muslim League now starts working against them. As, the leader of Congress were 'so dishonest, so crooked and so obsessed with the idea of smashing the Muslim League that there is no length to which they will not go to do so'. See, *Transfer of Power (TOP, hereafter)* vol. x, No. 221, Jinnah to Mountbatten, 26<sup>th</sup> April, 1947.

<sup>6</sup> Barney W. Spinner, *Partition: the Story of the Independence*, p. 10.

<sup>7</sup> A British Indian Army officer who investigated the Garhmukteshwar pogroms and also commanded the 4th Indian Infantry Division during the Second World War (1939-45).

thing is highly significant in Ambedkar's insight over the partition that both League and Congress were not ready to settle down the issue at any cost. It reminds me of what Woodrow Wyatt, a British MP and a member of the British Parliamentary delegation who visited India from December 1945 to January 1946, mentioned in his autobiography, 'Confessions of an Optimist', about Jinnah his private conversation over Independence. He writes Jinnah's statement as "*why don't the British drop all the talk of Independence? It's not necessary, and it will do no good. If you said you would stay, the Muslims would fight for you, and we could rule India together forever. The Hindus are too feeble to resist, and everyone would be happier*"<sup>8</sup>. Sir Evan Jenkins, former Viceroy's private secretary, aptly discussed this lunatic behaviour that "if Pakistan is the last available possibility, then the situation, in actual, shifts towards massive violence and bloodshed. On the contrary, the Non-Muslims will not accept this proposal peacefully and cited as 'Muhammadan Raj', certainly which will not be accepted at any cost"<sup>9</sup>.

### **The defeat of 'undefeated' Gandhi...**

Gandhi had a great responsibility to resolve the intense heat between Hindus and Muslims through his pacific principles and non-violent means. But Gandhi, too, had some inter-related controversies with his principles and actions, as he has been viewed as the father of Hindu nationalism &, therefore, militating against the Muslims. Both hold him ultimately responsible for the Partition of India"<sup>10</sup>. Besides the criticisms, Gandhi writes that his God was merely an 'ethical god' in his autobiography. Gandhi used to act as the mediator between both contemporaries. Throughout the Partition, Gandhi paid a considerable amount to be a mediator, especially for his principled mechanisms. The journalist, Philips Talbot, after meeting with Gandhi, examined a "feeling of frustration, if not of failure"<sup>11</sup>, even in his pacific strategies and policies. Against the Noakhali bloodshed killings, Gandhi urged all Hindus not to seek revenge. He inculcated the Bengali Hindus to 'die fearlessly' as "there will be no tears but only joy if tomorrow I get the news that all three of you [have been] killed"<sup>12</sup>. While working with his pacific means Gandhi, further instructed the Bengal Hindu Women to recall the significance "the incomparable power of Sita"<sup>13</sup>. He urged them to commit suicide rather than submit themselves in front of Muslim rioters to which he further stated that they must have learned to die before they could be injured. Undoubtedly, Gandhi's

<sup>8</sup> Woodrow Wyatt, Confessions of an Optimist, London, 1985, p. 131.

<sup>9</sup> Sir Bertrand Glancy to Lord Wavell, Transfer of Power, 16<sup>th</sup> August 1945, 6:71.

<sup>10</sup> Chittabrata Palit, Mahatma Gandhi and the Partition of India, in Pangs of Partition: The Parting of Ways, Vol. I, ed. by S. Settar and Indira Baptista Gupta, 2002, Manohar, Delhi p. 53.

<sup>11</sup> Philips Talbot, An American Witness to India's Partition, Sage Publications, Delhi, 2007, p. 204.

<sup>12</sup> Pyarelal, Mahatma Gandhi: The Last Phase, Vol. 1, Navjivan, Ahmadabad, 1956, p. 303.

<sup>13</sup> Gandhi's speech at prayer meeting on 17<sup>th</sup> October 1946. For more details, see also Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, Department of Government of India, 1958, Vol. 92, p. 344.

words were meant to restore peace and harmony between both rival contemporaries. On the other hand, Jinnah did not slam the massive, inhumane act for a full two weeks, even after the first raids. Whereas Gandhi tried to restrain these bloodshed events, Jinnah blamed Gandhi for the ‘outpouring of poison’.

On the other hand, Nehru, the political disciple of Gandhi, was not even in the mood to ponder over Gandhi’s peace proposal against his own egomaniac attitude. Meanwhile, while addressing the Media, Nehru cleared about his rigid intentions, which was not less than Jinnah’s<sup>14</sup>. None of the contemporaries was ready to ponder Gandhian principles and his placatory suggestion to avoid the partition situation. Quite possible, Gandhi would have been aware of the separation because of the ‘egomaniac’ nature in all discussions and debates. Unlike Jinnah, Gandhi had a great expectation from Nehru, who acted as the true recipient of his principles and norms through the freedom movement. Nehru’s counter to Jinnah and League gives Gandhi and his utopian values a significant setback.

Nehru gained (political) strength after Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel’s overt intervention into this matter. Patel, too, believed that League should be responded with force. Patel thought that Jinnah knew the intent of the Muslims, and he would not calm down on any other demand less than Pakistan<sup>15</sup>. In the words of Leonard Mosley present the stubborn picture of Patel who was better known as the ‘Iron fist’ of the Congress and Patel who immense contribution in Congress “kept the party going with regular infusions of money from the big Hindu millionaires, and with frequent purging’s and oiling of the political machine of nature with which Nehru would never have been asked to soil his hands”<sup>16</sup>. Where the mind is with fear, it would be impossible to handle with Gandhian principles. Similarly to Gandhian principles, the nation had witnessed the short-tempered and bittersweet statements of Nehru to his rivals.<sup>17</sup>

Undoubtedly, Gandhi was successful in every possible attempt to resolve the intensity between the two new but close rivals. In the words of Sailen Chatterjee, Journalist and peace worker, who observed that there was some resistance between the two newly emerged rivals in the earlier phase, i.e., Nehru and Jinnah. Apparently, Nehru’s egomaniac response towards Jinnah reflected the

<sup>14</sup> Interview at Dum Dum Airport on 2<sup>nd</sup> November 1946, in Collected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru (CWJN), ed. by S. Gopal, Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund, New Delhi, 1985, p. 53.

<sup>15</sup> Vallabhbhai Patel to Sir Stafford Cripps, 15<sup>th</sup> December 1946, in Prabha Chopra(ed.) Sardar Patel and the Partition of India, Konark, Delhi, 2010, p. 170.

<sup>16</sup> Leonard Mosley, The Last Days of the British Raj, London, 1961, p. 81.

<sup>17</sup> Nehru’s reply to Jinnah and league after their ignorance to every possible proposal to restrain the nation from partition. For more detail see Nehru’s broadcast on the Partition of India, 3<sup>rd</sup> June 1947, IOR: L/PJ/10/81.

failure of Gandhian principles. But, on the other hand, Gandhi put his strong criticism over Jinnah's remarks to bifurcate the harmony between Hindus and Muslims where he points out:

“The ‘two nations’ theory is an untruth...The Hindu law of inheritance governs many Muslim groups. Sir Mohammed Iqbal used to speak with pride of his Brahminical descent. Iqbal and Kitchleu are named common to Hindus and Muslims. Hindus and Muslims of India are not two nations. Those whom God has made one, man will never be able to divide”<sup>18</sup>.

Sir Michael Edwardes, the Viceroy-designate, who landed in Delhi on 22<sup>nd</sup> March 1947, observed Gandhi's action under profound paradox. At a prayer meeting on 31st May 1947, Gandhi exclaimed that “even if the whole of India burns, we shall not concede Pakistan even if the Muslim demanded it at the point of the sword”<sup>19</sup>. Sir Edwardes points out why Gandhi used to utter such kinds of inflammatory words when he had already submitted his own consent for Pakistan with Patel and Nehru in the meeting of the Congress Working Committee. Because of this paradoxical role played by Gandhi, Sir Edwardes concludes that “after independence, the orthodox Hindu political parties were to attack Gandhi violently for having played a double game and it was such attacks which led finally, though indirectly, to his assassination by a Hindu extremist in January 1948”<sup>20</sup>.

The premise is not to prove Gandhi's contribution insignificant rather enlighten how much responsibility he had to work against this violent partition proposal. Undoubtedly, at last, he, too, participated, overtly and covertly, in the partition proposal. For that, Sarojini Naidu said, “Gandhiji was politically dead. He sees in front of him the debris of his lifework”<sup>21</sup>.

### **Partition: A ‘Costly’ Affair**

It is unfeasible to forget the events of partition against the obsessed minds. As Ted Svensson points out, "how come one discourse takes precedence at the expense of other possible discursive formations?"<sup>22</sup>. After all, getting independence through partition makes no sense for the peace and harmony of mankind. Further, Philips Talbot points out the post-partition unity of Pakistan was retained only because of their uniformity to hate India.<sup>23</sup> India's elite leaders used the secular principle for national unity, whereas Pakistan's elites used Islam for their national unification. In the words of Pakistani historian and diplomat Hussain Haqqani in his seminal work *Pakistan: Between Mosque and Military* argued that-

<sup>18</sup> Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi (CWMG), no. 71, Harijan, 6<sup>th</sup> April 1940, pp. 388-9.

<sup>19</sup> Michael Edwardes, *The Last Years of British India*, Cassell, Allied Publishers Private Ltd., Calcutta, 1963, p. 165.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid*, p. 167.

<sup>21</sup> J. N. Sahnii, *The Lid off: 50 Years of Indian Politics*, Deep Publications, Delhi, 1972, p. 196.

<sup>22</sup> Ted Svensson, *Production of Postcolonial India and Pakistan: Meanings of Partition*, Routledge, 2013, p. 22.

<sup>23</sup> Philips Talbot, *op. cit.*, p. 361-368.

“Unsure of their fledgeling nation’s future, the politicians, civil servants, and military officers who led Pakistan in its formative years decided to exacerbate the antagonism between Hindus and Muslims.... with “Islamic Pakistan” resisting “Hindu India” .... they simply embraced Islam as a politico-military strategic doctrine that would enhance Pakistan’s prestige and position in the world”<sup>24</sup>.

Undoubtedly, Jinnah believed that his action was for the benefit of the Muslims and to preserve their identity under the Islamic norms and principles. But he forgets that he was, on the other hand, destroying their existence and making their lives even more miserable. On the other hand, the lives of Indian Muslims were not even quite pleasant, though those who migrated in huge numbers and those who retained in India suffered countless miseries. There is an Urdu verse that aptly points out this hardship faced by the Muslims of both sides, “*Na Khuda hee Mila, na visaal-e-Sanam Na idhar kay rahey, na udhar kay rahey* (They met neither Allah nor the idol They could, remain - neither here nor there.)”<sup>25</sup>. Pakistan’s leaders have a great misconception that India always acts as hegemonic and imperialist with them. Even after 1947, they still believe that their territorial integrity is in grave danger, and for that, they need to apply the process of ‘self-preservation’.<sup>26</sup> In the words of General Zia ul Haq (1981), the fear of Indian hegemony clearly reflects:

“What India wants is a subservient Pakistan, which should constantly remain under Indian influence, like some of the smaller states, unfortunately, in the region at the present moment who are nevertheless trying to assert their Independence. Pakistan cannot accept that position. India should know that very well”<sup>27</sup>.

With this deteriorate amount of fear, many political scientists wrote that Pakistan “represented a monument to the Muslim’s successful defiance of Hindu majority rule, as well as the territorial projection of the ideology of Islam- the basis for the creation of Pakistan”<sup>28</sup>. As, Philips Talbot, during his visit to both India and Pakistan, had examined that “hatred of India is the cement that holds Pakistan together”<sup>29</sup>. Moreover, the fear of Indian hegemony is reflected even in the economy. Since 1947, India and Pakistan have traded with each other. The legal trade has ranged

<sup>24</sup> Hussain Haqqani, Pakistan: Between Mosque and Military, Washington DC, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2010, pp. 316-17.

<sup>25</sup> Rafiq Zakaria, The Man Who Divided India, Popular Prakashan, July 2011, p. 203.

<sup>26</sup> Liaquat Ali Khan, Pakistan: the heart of Asia, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1950, pp. 11, 15, 121.

<sup>27</sup> Interview to Joseph Kraft, 11 March 1981. Cited in Islamabad Directorate of Film and Publications: Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of Pakistan, President of Pakistan General Zia ul Haq: Interviews to Foreign Media, Vol IV, P. 79.

<sup>28</sup> Mujtaba Razvi, The Frontiers of Pakistan: Study of Frontier Problems in Pakistan’s Foreign Policy, NPH, Karachi, 1971, p. 13.

<sup>29</sup> Philips Talbot, Op. cit., P. 361-368.

from \$100 million in the late 1990s, to \$300 million in 2003, to around \$2 billion in 2008.<sup>30</sup> According to Aparna Pande, according to World Trade Organization (WTO), India granted Pakistan Most Favoured Nation (MFN) status as early as 1996; however, in 2011, Pakistan has also given the same status to India. The reason why there is such little trade is political, not economic. There is a desire for parity in this sphere too.<sup>31</sup> Further, she argued that “Pakistan had an ideology and a manpower and that in parts of Pakistan (like Baluchistan and the frontier areas), there was a tradition of irregular forces (read Jihadists) were not a burden on the treasury and since they were independent entities, the state could disclaim responsibility from any action they undertook”<sup>32</sup>.

The aftermath of the partition created a security constraint in Pakistan, and with such insecurity, fervent strengthened the Pakistani army. Pakistan needed to increase its military strength, leading to close relations with the United States of America (USA). With this insecure relationship with India, in 1972, the head of the Pakistani army, Lieutenant General Gul Hasan, stated in an interview with the American interlocutors that “a credible force would still be needed to serve as a deterrent against any hostile intentions by India”<sup>33</sup>. Keeping this in mind, Pakistan exploded five devices on 28<sup>th</sup> May 1998, clearly reflecting their strategic counterparts and the mad desires for parity, “We have done it. We are India’s equal”<sup>34</sup>. Pakistan’s foreign policy was caste in the same manner as its domestic policies concerning ‘Pan- Islamism’. One of the founding elites of Pakistan, Liaquat Ali Khan, claimed, “even when we were subject people, we regarded the distress of Muslim countries as our own... by those natural postulates of Islamic fraternity which were formulated for our guidance thirteen centuries ago”<sup>35</sup>. Despite their tremendous efforts to build relations with many Muslim nations, they failed to isolate India from the Muslim world.

### Sum Up

In the epilogue, the author appealed to the political heirs of Nehru and Jinnah to finally put rest to these furies between the two nations. But, he already presages readers at the outset, “the story features no easy villains- and few heroes. The same men who led their people to Independence,

<sup>30</sup> S. Akbar Zaidi, ‘India- Pakistan Trade’, South Asian Journal, 2004, Vol. 4, [http://www.southasianmedia.net/Magazine/Journal/indiapakistan\\_trade.htm](http://www.southasianmedia.net/Magazine/Journal/indiapakistan_trade.htm); Figures for 2000 onwards taken from Ministry of Commerce & Industry, Govt. of India, [http://www.fibre2fashion.com/news/images/newspdf/Indo\\_pak\\_trade\\_69945\\_50777.pdf?PDFPTOEN=1b984f1fa99a4f789d1142f496a0d13377282b8a11327439970#PDFP](http://www.fibre2fashion.com/news/images/newspdf/Indo_pak_trade_69945_50777.pdf?PDFPTOEN=1b984f1fa99a4f789d1142f496a0d13377282b8a11327439970#PDFP).

<sup>31</sup> Aparna Pande, Pakistan: Issues of self-identity and parity with India, in Pakistan’s Political Labyrinths: Military, society and Terror, Ravi Kalia (ed.), Routledge, London, 2016, p. 9

<sup>32</sup> Aparna Pande, op. cit., p. 11.

<sup>33</sup> The American Papers: Secret and Confidential India, Pakistan, Bangladesh Documents, 1965-73, OUP, Karachi, 2000, p. 787.

<sup>34</sup> J. W. Anderson, Pakistan Sets off Nuclear Blasts: Today we have settled a score, Premier Says, Washington Post, 29<sup>th</sup> May 1998.

<sup>35</sup> M. Rafique Afzal (ed.), Speeches and Statements of Quaid-I-Millat Liaquat Ali Khan, 1941-51, Research Society of Pakistan, 1967, p. 216.



Nehru and his irascible Pakistani counterpart, Jinnah- would play a central role in creating the rift between their nations”<sup>36</sup>. And it must be said, they did so for the worst reasons: inexperience and ineptness, vanity, intellectual arrogance, unspoken prejudice, and straightforward, petty dislike of one another. Time has come when both nations need to ponder what they could achieve, which they (had)lost in rages.

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

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