

## Partition of India: Mutiny to Independence

Some journeys begin with noise  
With cymbals and loud percussion  
Uprising and rebellion in 1857  
And such a cloud of dust that you  
can't see the road ahead  
But through the chaos and the  
grime  
You feel awake for the first time

Ink on paper  
Swirls dots and crosses  
Legal reform gave more power to  
the masses  
Between 1901 and 1935  
The Government of India Acts  
Brought a political class to life  
And then a rumbling began like the  
murmur of an earthquake  
As new holders of stake  
Raised their voices for change

August 1920 a movement began  
The voice of one man  
Encouraged many to take a stand  
Mohandas Gandhi called for non-  
cooperation  
Forced eviction of the British Raj  
and their dictation  
Non-violence was the way  
Not a hair should be harmed  
He gave the scheme just a year  
But it soon became clear  
That more time would be needed  
To make great changes here

On the wind,  
The smell of subjugation remained  
A painful bitterness

Laced every second breath  
Becoming more rancid as patience  
gave way to despair  
Growing tendrils of trouble could be  
seen in the air  
Their men had gone to war  
Fought valiantly with their lives  
And now people wanted freedom  
An end to oppressive strife

Phase 2 of Gandhi's plan,  
Had the Satyagrahi's increase their  
efforts  
Bardoli peasants were asked to  
boycott land taxes  
But peaceful protest soon took a  
turn for the worst  
22 policemen lost to fire and a  
violent outburst  
The end of phase 2

And now 3 main parties raised their  
voices for the people  
The Indian National Congress who  
was mostly Hindu  
The Muslim League had Muhammad  
Ali Jinnah as their frontman  
And soon after came the Swaraj  
Party to provide a fan  
For the flames of anti-British  
rhetoric and dissatisfaction  
The people wanted freedom  
And an end to domination

Gandhi, Jinnah,  
Nehru and Chitta Das  
Stood tall and spoke for the needs  
of every caste,  
A wave was rising in the streets and  
in the buildings

Tremors and rumblings gave way to  
spurts of overflowing  
Religious appeals sometimes stoked  
the burning  
And underlying differences  
continued festering and churning  
Hindu vs. Muslim vs. Sikh  
Throw in caste system rules  
And the picture looks bleak  
A group of peoples who want the  
same goal  
But how they would achieve it  
Was yet unknown,

1924

Riots in Kohat  
Hindus targeted by Muslims  
It was only the start  
Of episodes of communal violence  
An overflow of frustrated silence

1930

Salt for your food  
To bring out the flavours and spice  
A flavour in itself, brings the meal to  
life

The Salt March

Non-violent disobedience they  
called it  
Thousands marched for a staple  
part of their diet  
Salt of their land  
They reached down and picked with  
their own hands  
Cutting out the self-imposed British  
middleman

Gandhi and up to 60,000  
Satyagrahis were arrested

That same year, around tables they  
held conferences  
3 times over they debated and  
rotated  
The main players took their seats  
And expressed their needs  
But without Gandhi of the Congress  
Party  
There was little progress in reality  
Twice more they convened  
And the frustrations of millions  
passed their lips  
But age-old differences nearly led to  
an eclipse  
Hampering the possibility of positive  
partnerships  
Talk between Muslims and Hindus  
always seemed to go askew  
And reginal Princes continued to  
argue

Blood boiled  
And peace in this strained situation  
Became less and less of a favourable  
option  
Militants grew in the camp of non-  
violence  
The Congress Party had a new arm  
Along with many fractures

Amongst Muslims there was  
growing unrest  
Towards the Indian National  
Congress  
Overlooked too often  
Treated like second class citizens  
In their own country  
By their own people  
They could no longer continue  
feeling unequal

Riot lines crossed Northern India  
Like warp and weft threads  
Religious violence  
Left more and more dead  
Words of hope and devolution  
Did as much good as bad  
Prophesying violent revolution

The glass of India's mirror  
Continued to crack  
As Muslim students launched  
An academic attack  
Led by Choudhary Ramat Ali  
A new solution was proposed  
A separate state for Muslims  
And soon only a few were opposed  
The first mention of Pakistan  
To be seen as a Muslim Fatherland  
The Persian word for Land of the  
Pure  
But the League's Jinnah remained  
unsure  
Reconciliation was still the aim  
A hope that was soon to wane

1937  
Elections came  
The Congress Party saw a good  
victory  
But for the Muslim League  
It was a different story  
It was now unerringly clear  
That for all Muslims near  
The League was not the only the  
voice to hear  
Jawaharlal Nehru wanted the  
League out completely  
So Congress and the British Raj  
would be the only remaining parties

But for Jinnah and his crew the  
Muslims came through  
And the impact of World War 2  
Caused shifting anew

*1939  
Britain declared war on Germany  
But Congress didn't appreciate the  
timing  
What are your post-war goals and  
ideals?  
The Brits were unanswering  
So, Congress broke away at last  
From any support or affiliation  
Relationship severed  
It was time for a new direction*

When one door closes  
Another door opens  
When a space becomes vacant  
The eyes of many sharpen  
Congress Party had broken all ties  
with the British Raj  
And so, Jinnah moved in and deftly  
took charge  
Promising Muslim support  
To the British cohort

A bold step in the game of political  
sport

March 1940  
The Lahore Resolution  
Was a direct proposition  
For an autonomous institution  
Pakistan was no longer a name or  
an idea  
But a reality very soon to appear  
As it came to their attention  
That to have any powers

The League needed further  
distinction

7 months later

An anti-war campaign  
Was the new refrain  
From Gandhi and the Congress  
Party  
An effort to subvert the British war  
effort  
Non-violently

Emotions churned and stirred  
Words flew across communities  
To far flung corners of towns and  
cities  
Lines of separation were deepened  
Deep enough you might see them  
Waves of sentiment were rising  
Momentum gathering  
Through the streets it went  
Rolling and surging

*June 1941*

Over 20,000 Congress Satyagrahi's  
imprisoned  
For bringing their anti-war vision  
To the light and to the fore  
Their efforts tamed as volunteers  
remained  
In their millions they enlisted  
While attitudes remained shifted  
The Indian Army rose to a force  
Their presence often changing the  
course  
Of battles and fortunes that were  
headed for remorse

As the Second World War raged on

Things continued to swing and  
change

Japan joined the Axis powers  
And an invasion of India came into  
range

Worry about losing their Indian  
assets

Descended upon the British  
So Churchill sent a message  
Via the personage of Sir Cripps  
A message to hopefully appease  
their fears

And avoid any inclinations towards  
Japan  
They'd get full dominion status after  
the war  
But any province could opt out if  
not sure

Such a message did not have the  
desired effect

And in fact, it was much the  
opposite

Congress discussed their response  
to it

And the Quit India campaign was  
born

Led by Gandhi supported by leaders  
of his party

But the very next day they were all  
imprisoned coldly

And nearly 100,000 others would be  
joining them shortly

A huge wave of rebellion

Came crashing down in the streets

**Do or Die** Gandhi's famous words

Became the most potent beat

On people's hearts as they prepared  
for whatever it'd take

Despite an early attempt to quell  
the storm by the Secretary of State  
Leo Amery made a speech hoping to  
turn the tide

But it was too late, the Indian  
people would not abide  
A season of strikes and civil unrest,  
Put the British Army in India to the  
test

Post offices and railway stations  
were attacked  
Riots and fights with police  
Pushed authorities to act  
Violence had erupted from this  
peaceful protest  
And British pilots dropped bombs to  
ruin their efforts

This battle soon ended  
But the war was not over  
The revolution would not be  
suspended  
It had just gone undercover  
The stand-up Congress Party now  
had an underground sector

One major problem remained  
unresolved  
Disagreement between Hindus and  
Muslims  
Threatened to dissolve  
Efforts for independence  
As they tried to decide  
How they'd run the country  
Once their land was finally  
unoccupied

Major changes in Britain  
Soon had a ripple effect  
They drew the curtain  
On the National government

Churchill was out Attlee was in  
But Clement Attlee failed to see  
The British Raj advantageously  
This new Labour government  
Wanted conflict resolution  
So, they could exit India  
With minimal retribution

*Winter elections*

*1945 to '46*

*In the Indian Parliament*

*Muslims had 30 seats*

*Congress lost their majority*

*And all 30 seats were taken by the  
League*

Jinnah wanted separation  
A complete contradiction  
To his earlier position  
Calls for Pakistan rang louder and  
louder  
Whereas the Congress Party  
Called for staying together  
Rumours spread that it was just a  
power play  
To keep control of the mostly Hindu  
state

Gandhi continued to ask for non-  
violence  
As peaceful protest faded into the  
distance  
Taking a complete back seat  
On a bitter day without sweet  
16<sup>th</sup> August 1946  
Jinnah's Direct Action Day  
Threw much of the country into  
violent disarray  
A definitive start  
To the Week of Long Knives

1000's injured and 1000's lost their  
lives  
Hindu and Sikh communities  
Suffered the heaviest losses  
Mothers, fathers, nephews, nieces  
Lost to the conflict of extreme  
differences

A provisional day for independence  
was soon declared  
The British government set the date  
For June in the year 1948  
The Viceroy for India  
Was Louis Mountbatten  
Who tried to encourage  
reconciliation  
Between Muslims and Hindus  
A united front was due  
For the desired smooth handover  
Of India's administrative power  
A task that would only increase  
tension  
In the midst of negative division  
In the end  
No compromise was found  
For Pakistan  
The Muslim population was bound  
The next issue  
Was how to divide the land  
More definitive  
Than lines casually drawn in the  
sand  
Washed away  
With every incoming wave  
Once the map was divided  
All things would change

*The date for independence  
Was brought a year closer  
By Louis Mountbatten  
So they could all leave sooner*

*From June 1948  
To August 15<sup>th</sup>, 1947*

Drawing borders  
Required sensitive discussion  
Considerate handling  
Of India's present situation  
The northwest and northeast  
Were majority Muslim populations  
And in-between a mostly Hindu  
section  
But amongst them all were also  
Christians and Sikhs  
And people who held other religious  
beliefs  
The community was richly diverse  
Concerning religion  
And so the Boundary Commission  
Was formed and a chairman was  
chosen  
A Mr. Cyril Radcliffe  
Of the legal profession  
With no experience  
Of India or its peoples  
To the task many would say he was  
unequal

And he had 6 weeks  
6 weeks to carve out a whole new  
country  
Weave separation into the tapestry  
Without ruining the stitches already  
there  
And rupturing the fabric beyond  
repair  
However, the impending results  
Revealed the lack of adequate care  
Given to this very delicate affair  
Such a significant demarcation  
Was not given its due consideration

For example  
The Punjab was split straight down  
the middle  
And so overnight millions of people  
Found themselves on the wrong  
side of the line  
Given little to no time  
To uproot their lives  
Many fell asleep where they called  
home  
And the next day were forced out  
With nowhere to go  
Chaos ensued as millions scrambled  
To avoid the troubled fate  
Of those in the wrong place  
More than 10million people fled  
from north to south and south to  
north India  
Creating a refugee crisis like no  
other  
Trains were attacked by violent  
militants  
Travelling refugees had no  
assurance  
That they would make it alive  
Or with their families intact  
It had become a matter of fact  
That they would encounter  
Violent acts

The Princely states of India  
Were neither immune nor exempt  
War over Kashmir closely followed  
independence  
Between India and Pakistan, they  
were loath to make a choice  
And so, Pakistan were determined  
to have their voice  
A tribal invasion was sponsored  
To annexe Kashmir  
So, the Maharaja appealed to India

Who made it quite clear  
Their help was conditional  
Kashmir must adhere  
And become part of India  
The alternative clearly severe

Violence raged  
And the streets remained hot  
Until a UN sponsored ceasefire  
removed the fire from the pot  
December 14<sup>th</sup>, 1948  
The Interdominion Agreement  
signage date  
Nehru and Liaquat put forth their  
signatures  
To quell the violence and inspire  
peaceful pictures  
Of harmony and unity across the  
two countries  
But until today violence permeates  
their histories

Millions of families were torn  
A new country was born  
The land had been parted  
Independence, granted