

Memories of the Partition and the Formation of Identities

A thesis presented by

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Declaration

It is hereby declared that

1. The thesis submitted is my own original work while completing degree at Brac University.
2. The thesis does not contain material previously published or written by a third party, except where this is appropriately cited through full and accurate referencing.
3. The thesis does not contain material which has been accepted, or submitted, for any other degree or diploma at a university or other institution.
4. I have acknowledged all main sources of help.

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Approval

The thesis titled “Memories of the Partition and the Formation of Identities” submitted by Zehra Tasneem (18117004) of Fall, 2019 has been accepted as satisfactory in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Bachelor of Arts [Anthropology] on 30.12.2019.

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Abstract:

The story of the Partition serves as the origin story of the modern Indian sub continent and continues to be relevant in the context of Bangladesh, India and Pakistan. Communal differences among the citizens of these three nation states continue to cause conflicts even though historically, culturally and geographically there exists substantial common grounds.

This paper highlights the biographies of certain members of Bangladesh's affluent upper middle class living in Dhaka. Their biographies and their answers to questions about identity have then been linked to show that identity is the result of personal history, aspirations and state categorization. Special attention has been paid to anthropological theories which have been used to further gain clarity regarding these complicated issues.

KEYWORDS: Partition, Nationalism, Identity, Master Status, Family, History

Table of Contents:

1. Declaration.....	02
2. Approval.....	03
3. Abstract	04
4. Table of Contents.....	05
5. Chapter 1 - Introduction).....	06
6. Chapter 2 - Literature Review.....	09
7. Chapter 3 - Methodology.....	14
8. Chapter 4 - History and Memories.....	17
9. Chapter 5 - Identity.....	22
10. Chapter 6 - Conclusion.....	27
11. Bibliography.....	29

Introduction:

“The plan to partition India was announced on June 3 1947.” (Butalia,1998,p.34). Pakistan was declared as a sovereign state on the 14th of August, 1947 followed by India on the 15th. Prior to this, the current states of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh formed undivided, colonial India. The Partition in 1947 thus resulted in the creation of two nations (eventually three) marking a watershed moment in the history of the Indian sub-continent. (Saberwal, 2005)

“The Indian Independence Act, which received royal assent on July 18, set in stone the partition of India, and authorized a commission to demarcate the borders of divided Punjab and Bengal.” (Pillalamarri, 2019,p.1) A vital component of the division of India : the Radcliffe line was drawn up by Sir Cyril Radcliffe as commissioned by the British Governor - General of India, Lord Mountbatten. The plan was approved to draw up the international borders based on the 2 nation theory, of dividing the country into dual parts based on Muslim and Hindu majorities. The Radcliffe line was drawn on the west through Punjab creating the Indo-Pakistani border and on the East: the demarcation led to breakdown of Bengal creating East Pakistan. Details of the border were not disclosed till the 17th of August of 1947. (Pillalamarri, 2019)

Thus began one of the greatest migrations in history and the displacement of millions of people. The premise of the Partition was to create nations for India’s religious communities. Religio-ideological identity remained the basis for the bifurcation of the nation, specifically Hindu/Muslim identity.

The following statistics show the effect of the decision to divide India. The census of 1941 and 1951 reflect on the almost immediate resettlements that occurred. It is to be noted that the census of undivided India in 1941, showed a majority of Hindus who composed 73.81 % of the whole population, Muslims made up 24.28 % and the Christians population amounted to 1.91 % . (Joshi, Srinivas and Bajaj, 2005, p.9)

According to a pre-Partition census in 1941 of the current geographical area of India 84.64 % of the population were classified as “Indian Religionists” (Joshi, Srinivas and Bajaj, 2005,p.11) 13.38 % as Muslim and 2.1 % as Christian. Post Partition India in 1951 counted 87.22 % as Hindu while the Muslim population dropped to 10.43 % .

Comparatively the census of Pakistan in 1941 showed 19.687% as Hindus, 78.824 % as Muslim and 1.489 % as Christians. Post-partition, the census of 1951 in Pakistan provided statistics of an overwhelming religious majority of Muslims amounting to 97.119 % while the Hindu population decreased to a meagre 1.5 % . In the present geographical area of Bangladesh, 1941

to 1951 saw the Hindu population decrease from 29 % to 22 % while the Muslim population grew from 70 to 76 %. (Joshi, Srinivas and Bajaj, 2005)

The religious demography and the changes in its composition as noted above, were brought about by the migration, some forceful, some voluntary. According to some statistics 16.7 million people (Saberwal, 2005) were uprooted, some remain officially missing.

The Partition remains a story of communal violence (Chatterji, 2002), of British policies of divide and rule (Rafi, 2005), of segregation (Desai, 1948) and of identity politics. The partition did not occur due to a singular reason of religious identity but one that was rooted in a fight for power. According to history (Rafi, 2005) (Saberwal, 2005) (Desai, 1948) undivided India has always been home to multiple religions and identities. The Partition thus represents a huge shift in the history of the sub-continent. Memories of the Partition live on through those who witnessed it and who in turn have passed them onto their descendants.

Identities remain at the epicentre of the Partition whether it be religious or nationalist. Nationalist identity is a complicated and contested notion. Bangladeshi citizens who migrated from India before or shortly after the Partition have been part of three nation states in their lifetime. Their views on nationalism and identity thereby require more understanding.

Hamza Alavi's idea of post-colonial states having an overdeveloped superstructure is linked to post colonial states having convoluted histories and complicated class structures. "The essential problem about the state in post-colonial societies stems from the fact that it is not established by ascendant native bourgeoisie but instead by a foreign imperialist bourgeoisie." (Alavi, p.61) Colonial influences do not disappear with colonial rule according to the author giving rise to complex state structures. While the author allows that the superstructure is not completely reliant on the base, it is still a determinant. The superstructure as outlined by Marx, includes the culture, ideologies and identities that people inhabit.

This paper explores ideas of nationalism and national identity and how they become overdeveloped when it comes to postcolonial immigrants. But how? Moreover how does nationalism translate within generations among the same family? The goal of this paper is to evaluate identity as a product of personal history by studying upper middle class Muslim Bangladeshis who migrated to Bangladesh from India after the Partition of colonial India.

General Objectives

- Present personal histories and link it to identity

Specific Objectives

- Compare between generations their idea of identity
- Establish notions of identity among and between families based on class, religion and nationality. Find out if they differ and how so.

Literature Review:

1. History

Any research on Partition, irrespective of its anthropological perspective, must take into consideration accounts of history on a national/state level scale. The Partition affected the lives of millions of people and one of the largest populations in history. The Partition was a state policy which changed the lives of most people in colonial India - and it continues to tie together the births of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. The Partition is thus collective history. When analyzing the works of different authors, one notes focus by different authors on priming different factors and perspectives including political, economic and communal disparities. Authors like Joya Chatterji dwell on the role of elite on nationalist politics while Butalia emphasizes the role of the personalized narratives as the key to understand the actuality of partition,

Joya Chatterji's *Bengal Divided* delves into the history of Bengal and establishes that the Partition was not merely an attempt by the British empire to divide the Indian sub-continent but an event that resulted due to recurring clashes between Hindus and Muslims. Chatterji writes about the role of the Bengal "bhadroluk" and their role and influence in nationalist politics. History focuses on the fact that the Muslim League and British colonial forces nudged the way for the Partition, Chatterji does not digress but chooses to talk about the influence of the Hindu Bengali elite on the division. Chatterji regards the British imperial political policies as the lynchpin in the rise of Hindu communalism. Chatterji's hypothesis is thus - The rise of Hindu communalism led the pathway to the ideology that the Partition was a way for Bengali Hindus to gain social and political power. Chatterji's work offers an alternate way of looking at history and focusing on socio-economic factors that were catalysts in the breaking of the Indian sub-continent.

In drawing from Chatterji, this division is apparent, through accounts of my respondents (Bengali Muslims) who were made to feel that West Bengal was no longer their home. Bengali Muslims from affluent families regardless of their wealth and influence found they could no longer call Kolkata home. West Bengal numerically had a larger number of affluent Hindus as compared to Muslims and Hindu classes had more socio-economic influence. For them leaving India to move to East Pakistan meant leaving for a more promising future. This fight over resources resulted in the migration of Muslims who believed that more was to be gained by leaving West Bengal.

Biswas Chakrabarty in his book, *“Partition of Bengal and Assam, 1932-1947”* writes that the riots which started in 1946 were a contributing factor in the decision to Partition India. “This is not however to argue that the riots were solely responsible for partition. What resulted in the vivisection was certainly the well grounded Hindu-Muslim chasm, nurtured historically by a process in which not only in which these communities played significant roles but the contribution by the British Government was equally significant.” Chakrabarty makes the point that the partition was a decision that was not “forced upon the sub-continent” but rather that when the rising religious differences had become reified, the best possible outcome considering the circumstances was perhaps the partition. This coupled with the failure of secular nationalism and British policies made the partition inevitable.

Chatterji and Chakrabarty both cite various factors in the events that preceded the partition and eventually resulted in the division of the sub-continent. The writers consider the decision as being influenced by socio-economic factors stemming from Muslim and Hindu factions wanting to gain socio-economic power or atleast trying to maximize it. The otherizing of Muslims by Hindus and vice versa in a turbulent economic and political climate were catalysts in the breaking of the nation/state.

In talking to witnesses and survivors of the Partition, the notion of religion and state level differentiation is something they remember. For them, India had become a state for Hindus and by leaving India they were moving to greener pastures so to speak. Pakistan was a country created just for Muslims, a place where they would be able to escape segregation and fear. It represented to them particularly after the riots, a sort of Utopia.

Chatterji, Chakrabarty, Saberwal all talk about communalism in the context of colonial India. However, this is traced back to policies, to economic gain, to British interference and not something that was inherent to the Indian sub-continent. These authors make the point that while communalism and religious differences were in fact central to the bifurcation of India, it was a result of a long history of institutional and social differentiation.

2. Nationalism

Liah Greenfeld’s *Nationalism : Five Roads to Modernity* defines nationalism as “collective solidarity” . (Greenfeld,1992) She argues that nationalism itself does not automatically refer to “particular nationalism”. According to the author that while the concept of nationalism entails a notion of homogenous individuals, it is not a uniform concept - “as the idea of nation was transferred from one society to another, the nature of nationalism changed,” (Greenfeld,1992) She proposes that different categories of nationalism come into being due to different political structures or organizations thus leading to different unique and different types of nationalism.

In the case of the Partition, I have come across various ideas of nationalism - Muslim Nationalism, Indian Nationalism, Hindu Nationalism, Bengali Nationalism all of which are

relevant to this paper. Nationalism is a concept that evolves and transforms over time. If we consider the Marxist idea of nationalism, then it is merely a product of superstructure which in itself came into being after the economic base. The nation in its cynical Marxist idea is merely a byproduct of capitalism - a necessity for industrialization and economic development.(Saklani,2009,p.2)

In studying Muslim nationalism and the history of India - Islamic rulers become relevant. According to Bimal Prasad (1999), Muslim Nationalism in India can be traced back to the second half of the 19th century, This means that all of my respondents and their parents were born as Muslims into a territory where there was a consciousness of Muslim identity and nationalism.

According to Desai (1948), nationalism is a historical category. Meaning it is a social production and related to “a certain stage of evolution of the life of the community,”. (Desai,1948,p.1) Indian Nationalism as stated by Desai was born as an indirect result of British imperialism. Pre-British India according to the author propagated religious education as per the person’s religious affiliations. It was the British Administration who brought to India a rational and secular form of education. If we consider the nation as a product of modernity, then it was only the advent of modern education which was introduced during the time of British rule that a consciousness regarding rationality and democracy grew.

Desai (1948) writes that Indian Nationalism originated in the latter half of the 1800’s. This was due to a rising number of educated Indians who were able to distinguish a conflict of interest with the British administration and their want of a cultural evolution of India barring British influences.

It is to be noted that the Indian Nationalist Movement consequently resulted in a socially conscious intelligentsia who exerted influence over the masses Desai (1948) focuses on the fact that India’s sprawling middle class were the ones who came together with the consciousness about freedom and democracy and publicized it through propaganda and education.

3. Anthropological Theories

Keeping in mind, the idea of communalism - Arjun Appadurai’s Fear of Small Numbers makes for a contextual read. Appadurai writes that when it comes to a nation state, the lines between “us and them” have always been blurred and unclear across large spaces “ Large scale violence is not simply the product of antagonistic identities but that violence itself is one of the ways in which the illusion of fixed and charged identities is produced,..”.

(Appadurai,2006,p.54)Appadurai writes about the complex matter of majorities and minorities and how such ideas are produced. Within the boundaries of state, ideas of nationalism ends up creating social boundaries. When construction of a national ethos, is based on a singular

language or religion, it creates a minority. For there to be an idea of “us”, the state needs to create the idea of “them”. For there to be a majority, there needs to be a minority. Appadurai explains predatory identities as “whose social constructions and mobilization require the extinction of other, proximate social categories, defined as threats to the very existence of some group, defined as a we,” (Appadurai,2006,p.51)

This conjecture is particularly relevant if we apply it to the clash of identities in the Indian subcontinent. Appadurai’s theories of us and them, attempt to explain how the othering of others is related to large scale acts of violence. This is preceded and also simultaneously accompanied by the solidification of identity based on us versus them. The Partition occurred in part due to the communal violence that happened owing to Muslims and Hindus creating an idea of ‘us’ versus ‘them’. Appadurai’s idea of predatory identities, is relevant when in partition history we see the violence inflicted on people by those from other religions. Muslims felt the need to kill Hindus, Hindus felt the need to hunt Muslims and the witch-hunt was due to this sense of other.

Similarly, Bernard Cohn’s Census may complement Appadurai’s theories. Cohn’s work is based on the solidification and the creation of identities in response to the census. Cohn writes that when the British imperial government asked Indians to identify themselves in a certain way, based on caste and religion etc. it brought into being a case of identity. Once the census was undertaken, it eventually led to the creation and in turn, solidification of identity, one that did not exist before.

In accordance with identity politics, the partition meant Hindus belong to one nation and Muslims another. Their identity was cemented by violence, policies and the 2 nation theory. The Partition meant ‘your key identity is your religion, not your birthplace nor your family’s.’

This creation of identity remains permanent in some cases and gives rise to master status, as seen in my respondents. Those who witnessed the Partition (among those whom I studied) clung to their Muslim identity due to their personal histories.

3. Personalized History

The problem with history and nationalist politics and its literature is thus, it is deeply impersonal. Keeping aside theories of how history, or thought in itself is a product of power discourse, such literature discounts the individual. In remedy, we have Urvashi Butalia’s book on the Partition – The Other Side of Silence. Butalia reconstructs history by focusing on memories - memories of individuals who recount their experiences of the brutality of the breaking of the nation. Butalia’s book includes accounts of people who firsthand experienced the events of the Lahore- Punjab clashes. Butalia’s book The Other Side of Silence is an example of personalized history, in some ways it is subaltern history. Butalia’s book is focused on the Lahore-Punjab or Sikh-Muslim conflict, therefore what is lacking here is the history of West Bengal and East Pakistan. Similar to how Lahore and Punjab have cultural intersections and shared boundaries, so do West Bengal and East Pakistan. However, regardless of similarities or dissimilarities, the partition still

divided them. Therefore, the gap created by the absence of Bengali personalized history or narrative of the Partition, is my focus of research and study.

Butalia also talks about “gendered telling of the Partition” due to her experiences of noting the ways in which women and men talk about the event differently. History has most often omitted women’s voices and feminist research is thus tantamount to knowing and understanding the Partition. This is why I have focused on women’s voices through female respondents.

Methodology

“Anthropologists are their own worst critics of the ethnographic method.” (Sanjek,1990,p.385) Ethnographies are defined as the study of people and cultures. Anthropologists widely agree on the lack of objectivity (Hayano,1979) and acknowledge power relations (Said,1989: Geertz,1973) when it comes to conducting research. Objectivity is an impossibly impassioned activity which may realistically be impossible for a researcher to master.

When it comes to ethnographies, I can think of two articles which I kept in mind when considering the reliability of my research. The first is Clifford Geertz’s essay ‘Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture’ which outlines and examines how our understanding of activities and actions is thus that - our interpretation of it. Ideally speaking ethnographies are factual, impassive records. (Geertz,1973). “ it does lead to a view of anthropological research as rather more of an observational and rather less of an interpretive activity than it really is.” (Geertz,1973, p. 9). However, as human beings with our habitus (Bourdieu,1973) we are tied down by our limitations of thinking and are not devoid of personal reactions. Habitus is the product of our interactions with society. It becomes ingrained in us unconsciously and it trains us to think, feel and act in specific ways. Therefore in a way we cannot detach ourselves from our habitus.

In going back to Geertz, he makes the point that ethnographies are comprised of ‘ thick descriptions’ which are founded on the interpretation by the researcher of activities, rather than being just a record of said activity. “In short, anthropological writings are themselves interpretations; and second and third order ones to boot.” (Geertz,1973, p. 15) It is important to remember this when reading ethnographies that such research is from the specific point of view of a singular person.

Therefore, this paper and my writing of it represents and theorizes my interpretation of the information I have acquired and accrued. It is not merely an observation or stating of facts. In acknowledging this it does not absolve me of my responsibility to be objective or portray facts as honestly as I can, rather it brings to the table my subjectivity. Aligned with the notion of “thick description” is the idea of an “auto ethnography”. David Hayano’s “Auto-Ethnography: Paradigms, Problems and Prospects” (Hayano,1979) consider the virtues of such an advent.

According to Hayano, the problem with auto ethnography is the researcher’s connection with his/her subjects. “The criteria for auto-ethnography ,then, must include some prior knowledge of the people, their culture and language, as well as the ability to be accepted to some degree, or “pass” as a native member.” (Lewis,1973,p.599).

This paper is for the most part based on my own family members. Some of the women I interviewed are not members of my family but are related to a friend or someone I knew well. None of these interviews were with complete strangers.

My paper is based on interviews I carried out in drawing rooms familiar to me and in talking to people whom I've known all my life through semi-structured interviews. However, in asking questions regarding the personal histories of the Partition, I gained knowledge and understanding about the very same people. Questions about identity and memories from when my interviewees were children were ones I had not asked before nor did I consider asking. My respondents were majoritarially women.

This paper is based on their histories, their identities and thoughts. My respondents are educated upper middle class Bangladeshi Muslim women who have inherited property from their families. I would like to introduce my interlocutors in the following section:

Munira Ahmed

Born in 1939 in Murshidabad, India. Munira is one of five siblings and one of four sisters. Her eldest sister is Fauzia Kabir. At the time of the Partition Munira was 8 years old and she can recall the terror of the riots and the journey to East Pakistan.

Munira married Nasir in 1958 and gave birth to two daughters, Niddu and Rimqu. Nasir was killed during the Bangladeshi Independence war of 1971.

Post Independence, Munira taught at a reputed school and acted as the sole breadwinner. She inherited property and a house from her father and has lived there since 1972. Niddu, her youngest daughter is one of my other respondents.

Niddu Ahmed

Niddu was born in 1963 in Dhaka city. The death of her father in 1971 lies at the crux of her personality and identity. Her sense of identity is tied to her loss of her father at the age of 7 and the horrors of the war. She is fiercely patriotic and at the same time aware of the problems related to nationalism. She is a professor of International Relations and has been teaching since she completed her Masters. Her education has led to a consciousness about nationalism and how it is constructed. She disregards Benedict Anderson's theories of nationalism and thinks it is not merely imagined but felt.

Fauzia Kabir

Fauzia was born in 1933 in Murshidabad. She is the oldest of my respondents which is reflected in the clarity with which she remembers the turmoil of the pre-Partition years. She has a fully articulated sense of politics in British India and when asked about history she is quick to

comment on Jinnah, Nehru, Gandhi and Patel. She got married in 1946. However, she lived with her family till 1949. She was not particularly interested when asked about her sense of identity and had nothing to say about it.

Sarwari Rahman

Born in 1935 in Kolkata. Sarwari does not remember much about the riots or the Partition. Her memories are mainly regarding the hardships she faced living in East Pakistan right afterwards. A feminist leader who has worked in the development sector, Sarwari is more concerned with the current situation of the country. She considers herself Bangladeshi through and through and thinks the Partition happened a few lifetimes ago and is water under the bridge at this point in her life.

Raiyan Rahman

Raiyan is Sarwari's grandson and was born in Dhaka in 1993. He completed his undergraduate degree from University of Massachusetts Amherst and is currently in Dhaka. When asked about family history he says he knows the gist of it but not the specifics. He is skeptical of nationalism as an idea.

Sneha Ahmed

A direct descendant of a revered anti-colonial revolutionary poet, Sneha was born in India in 1993. She has been brought up in Bangladesh and is an official citizen. Her family has roots in India while her great-grandfather is the national poet of Bangladesh. Sneha is a unique case among my respondents as her family moved to Bangladesh in the 70's. However her familial ties to the country and awareness of the Partition coupled with her dual nationalist identity makes her an interesting case in studying identity.

History and Memories

“Why had the history of the Partition been so lacking in describing how Partition had impacted on the lives of ordinary people, what it had actually meant to them?” (Butalia, 1998, p.260)

The history of the Partition in recent times has gone through a major overhaul. 2017 marked the 70th anniversary of the Partition and various media channels including the BBC covered extensively the “underside of history” as Butalia calls it. BBC released a series called “My Family, Partition and Me: India 1947” exactly 70 years after the Partition which attempted to explore personal histories of families, one of a Muslim family, one of a Hindu family and one of a British colonial family. The Daily Star published a special issue on the same date in collaboration with writers from India and Pakistan. A simple search on Google yields thousands of results regarding the Partition and theories alluding to how and why it had happened. In looking for Partition related content on an academic website, i.e. JSTOR, it shows more than 17,000 related articles on the subject. India’s breakthrough Netflix series the Sacred Games is rife with Partition anecdotes, as a prelude to the tensions between India and Pakistan. The Partition and its memories are ever present in our lives, as Indians, Pakistanis and Bangladeshis.

Inheritance refers to more than economic capital. In conversing with families with traumatic histories we can consider the interesting theory of Genetic Imprinting. Genetic Imprinting refers to genes that are inherited from one parent. The study of epigenetics suggest trauma can be inherited (Costa, Yetter & DeSomer, 2018) making it something we cannot consider self contained to individuals. In reference to a follow up article by the BBC, “Can the legacy of trauma be passed down the generations?” Martha Henriques (2019), the author questions the validity of such a theory and notes “The consequences of passing down the effects of trauma are huge, even if they are subtly altered between generations. It would change the way we view how our lives in the context of our parents’ experience, influencing our physiology and even our mental health.” (para.39) If such a theory is to be considered, trauma passed through generations and individuals and its effects are immense.

History as we had been taught is changing. “Bringing public history in school offers the opportunity that pupils can come to appreciate history as an ongoing conversation that yields not final truths, but an endless succession of discoveries and interpretations that change our understanding not only of the past, but ourselves and of the times in which we live.” (Bühl-

Gramer,2018,p.202) The author in question goes on to talk about decentralizing history or incorporating more than one narrative into history that is taught and about deconstructing pre-existing narratives. (Buhl-Gramer, 2018)

We are thus at a precipice of changing History as a subject, where not only has subaltern studies have become much more accessible and visible but also in the way historians have started to reject the singular narratives of history. Oral histories is the root of my research in conjunction with articles and publications by those interested in alternative histories. This chapter is dedicated to the women who remain the ‘gatekeepers’ of history and their ability to remember so much about their families and their struggles. Family histories transcend generations and time periods and this is my attempt to archive oral histories of women and their families.

In contemporary history, the Partition serves as the origin story of the sub-continent; filled with violence and traumatic memories.

“Partition children. Listening to these stories, or simply reading about them, I had to constantly remind myself that it was children we were talking about – these stories, told by adults, were stories about what had happened to them as children. Six,eight,nine,eleven,ten...these were the sorts of ages they had been then” (Butalia, 1998,p.194)

My questions originally were geared towards exploring familial differences in identity. However, writing this paper and talking to children of the Partition their histories became the most poignant part of my research. Their histories have shaped their ideologies and it has helped me understand in certain cases their hostility/wariness regarding “others” and their construction of whom they refer to outsiders.

In this chapter I will attempt to link personal histories and experiences to how my respondents identity themselves. Delving into memories and history, it struck me how one’s identity is rooted in personal history. This paper therefore explores the confluence of history and identity:

Munira Ahmed was born in 1939 in Murshidabad and is the third born among her five siblings. Her earliest memories are of the riots she witnessed living in Kolkata in 1946. Her family had a house in Park Circus and she recalls that her neighbours were Sikhs. During the time of the riots, the women of the family stayed at her paternal aunt’s place a few blocks away while the men stayed behind to protect the house. Her father, elder brother and uncles kept on hand hot water and bricks incase they were attacked and would barricade the entrance to the house with bamboo sticks. She remembers the day before the riots started her brother went to visit the neighbouring Sikhs. Her brother saw them sharpening their blades and he asked if they would attack his family, their neighbours said no they would not as they had known the family for a long time. A few lanes away a rich industrialist named Birla owned a large building which housed over a hundred Sikhs. Munira says these men were always ready to kill Muslims. She remembers the terror she felt during this time and says that Muslims were weak and susceptible to attacks. She

remembers the looting that happened and shops being set on fire and the constant helplessness and terror. She also mentioned that it was extremely difficult for people to go to work as they would be stopped on the streets and made to prove their religious identity. If the individuals were Muslim, they were assaulted or murdered.

She further made the point that the British army were present in India during this time but they made no efforts to stop the violence.

Munira's family made the journey to East Pakistan on the 12th of August, 1947. Her brother who was married to a Pakistani woman moved to Lahore while the rest of her immediate family took the train to Rajbari station. The journey itself was dangerous as it was a train full of Muslims and thus every compartment was barricaded from the inside. Munira was eight years old during the time of the Partition and seven when she witnessed all the violence.

The decision to move to East Pakistan was made by her father who was a government official and was given the choice to do so. She says it was because her father did not want his daughters to marry Muslim men. This statement in itself shows the extent to which some Muslims were afraid, wary and distrustful of Hindus. Munira's father had become so alienated from the idea of a multi-cultural India that he wanted complete separation from people who used to be his neighbours. This statement represents the disillusionment of their particular family. The Partition had become real. At this point, Munira voiced her opinion regarding Kolkata and Hindus - that the burden of remembering what had happened has made her fear or perhaps hate Hindus and Sikhs and that even though she lived in Kolkata that would no longer be her home. She has no attachment to her previous home.

When asked about her identity, Munira says she considers herself Muslim first and Bangladeshi second.

Fauzia Kabir was born in 1931 in Murshidabad. She is Munira's eldest sister and was fifteen at the time of India's division. Her earliest memories are from what she speculates as 1939. She remembers that the British Administration strongly discouraged a sense of community among Bangalis. Her paternal grandfather was educated as a lawmaker and judge and lived in Bihar. Her father was a member of the Special Branch and according to her it was his upbringing in Bihar and his lack of "Bengali-ness" which prompted the British Administration to relocate him to West Bengal. Being a member of the Special Branch, he came across many letters which were related to the anti-colonial movement, Fauzia remembers that her father always burned these documents to keep the British administration unaware. She also says that as a child she acted as a messenger sometimes and that even though she never was able to understand the contents of these letters, her father taught her to burn them. She says that was her father's support of the anti British movement.

Fauzia surmises that the main cause of the partition was the othering of Muslims. She is of the opinion that at every level Muslims were made to feel like they do not belong and Muslim

politicians then came to the conclusion that perhaps they do need a separate space for their own community.

Fauzia got married in 1946 but continued to live with her parents and siblings. On the 12th of August - she also made the same harrowing train journey to East Pakistan with her family. Fauzia was not interested in speaking about identity or rather had nothing to say when asked about her sense of nationalism and identity. She did however acknowledge her Muslim background.

Sarwari Rahman was born in 1933 in Kolkata and remembers living there as a child. She has a hazy recollection of the partition and the riots preceding it and told me it was so long ago she no longer thinks about it. Sarwari does however remember how the decision to migrate came about. Her father, after much thought told her that it is in the family's interests to move to East Pakistan. She was told that staying back in India would make them "second class citizens" but East Pakistan could be their homeland. Also, since the entire country had bought into the Two Nation Theory, so should they.

Sarwari's struggles have mainly been that on living in East Pakistan/ Bangladesh. She has worked for the empowerment of women in Bangladesh and that she what she looks back upon when thinking about her family,

Niddu Ahmed (birth year: 1963) was born in Dhaka, Bangladesh. Her childhood memories are of living in Chittagong with her parents and sister until May, 1971. May 11th marks the date her father was taken prisoner by the Pakistani army. His body was never found but there were mass graves found nearby,

After her father was taken away - Niddu, her mother and sister faced numerous near death situations while travelling to and while living in Dhaka. Post Independence, the family set up their lives in Dhaka and struggled financially. Niddu's childhood is plagued with memories of the uncertainty of the fate of her father.

Niddu and her mother, Munira have been first hand witnesses of the horrors of xenophobia and war. Niddu surmises that she has lost "normal" memories of her father after the trauma of 1971. Her mother became widowed at 32 years old and has spent the rest of her life wondering what had really happened to her husband. As a person who had migrated to East Pakistan with the idea that life would become better, the trajectory their lives had taken was not something the family ever expected. Niddu has immense respect for her mother who left their house in Chittagong wearing 2 sarees and carrying a small bag of her wedding jewelry and with so had brought up and protected her children fearlessly.

Raiyan Rahman, the grandson of Sarwari Rahman has had a comfortable childhood. His family is close knit and economically stable, allowing him to be educated at one of Dhaka's best schools. After completion of his O levels Raiyan moved to India to complete his IB and soon after he went to attend the University of Massachusetts Amherst.

At Amherst, Raiyan met his long term girlfriend of now, Pooja who is an American-Indian and a third generation migrant. Pooja refers to herself as agnostic and American.

Sneha Ahmed was born in 1993 in the city of Kolkata. Her mother and siblings were also born in the same city. Her great grandfather is the celebrated and historic poet, Kazi Nazrul Islam. Sneha grew up in Dhaka city and then attended high school in India. Post high school graduation she enrolled at Assumption University in Thailand. Sneha held an Indian passport until recently. At the time of my interview, she was officially an Indian citizen. She applied for a change in citizenship when she set up her business in Dhaka and required Bangladeshi citizenship for legal reasons.

Identity

Master Status and Memories

Identity is a multi-faceted notion (Sen,2006) (Jamieson,2002) which may refer to one's nationality, ethnicity, sexuality, gender, occupation or religion . Master status refers to a part of one's identity that will in most cases overpower or dominate others in most social situations. (Becker,1963). Partition in plain English means to divide into parts. The Partition of India does not only refer to divisions through state lines rather it is more importantly about division in identities. It is a study of space, state lines, social classes and identities constructed. The Partition then becomes a study of identities , an amalgamation of personal history and state categorization in this case, Some identities are given and sometimes these **given identities** continue to define us. This chapter outlines different kinds of identity that is relevant to my research, theories regarding them and how my respondents identify themselves.

Religious Identity

Religion is cited as the crucial factor when it comes to the Partition in India.

In speaking to 1st generation migrants and in comparison- their descendants, there is a difference in terms of master status. When it comes to Munira, Fauzia - witnesses of the partition of India, when asked they consider themselves Muslims first. The Partition effectively categorized Munira and Fauzia as Muslims. Prior to the Partition, India was home. Post-Partition and in lieu of the Two Nation Theory this changed. India became the land for Hindus and Sikhs and Pakistan the homeland for Muslims. (Butalia,1998) (Chatterji,1994) Munira and Fauzia's memories of the chaos and violence of the partition at a young age made more of an impression that the war of 1971. The partition thus represents great change. The partition was an event which played an important role in the lives of my respondents and led to the mass migration of millions of people. It changed their lives.

The Partition occurred on the basis of religion. (Saberwal,2005) The categorization and cementing of identity was done on a national scale. In this case, identity became political. No other aspect of one's identity mattered, only one's religion did. Therefore we see the creation of Master Status. (Becker,1963) 1947 was not the only time my respondents witnessed violence. 1947 to 1971, Bangladesh struggled with West Pakistan for autonomy until finally becoming independent in December of 1971.

“ Reluctant to rely on religious allegiance alone, successive regimes in Pakistan embarked on a strategy of forcible cultural assimilation towards the Bengalis.” (Mookherji,2012,p.6)
Bangladesh and Pakistan both had a majority of Muslims, however there was a divide in terms of

language and lifestyle. Bengali Nationalism gained coherence post the Language Movement in 1952. (Ahmed,2000) Pre- 1971,the clashes had translated to the separation of Bangalis and Pakistanis. I

n this instance, Niddu for example, who was a child of 7 in 1971 and lost her father in the war, being Bangladeshi and Bangali took precedence over being Muslim. Her primary identity when asked now is Bangladeshi. Munira and Fauzia as young girls were first hand witnesses of the violence of Pre Partition riots. For them at an early age the memories of the importance of being Muslim perhaps shaped their adult sense of identity.

“ It remains widely taken for granted that some sense of continuity of self, the anticipation of a future and a memory of the past, is intrinsic to the human condition and this is often implicit, if not openly acknowledged in much sociological theory.” (Jamieson,2002, p 4) Memories as Jamieson writes, is a vital component of being human. Memories and experiences are what identities are made of. For Niddu, being a child during 1971 and witnessing numerous scenes of violence and knowing her father had been killed due to him being Bangladeshi is precisely what makes her a staunch patriot. She is a Bangladeshi first and everything else second.

From my observation, identity is the result of a myriad of factors including violence, state level categorization and early childhood memories. Identity is a complicated matter and no singular factor can be attributed to one's notion of self. Rather, analysis lets us ponder about the number of factors which contribute to construction identity of self. It's important to remember that master status is not mutually exclusive with plurality of identity. Munira thinks of herself first and foremost as a Muslim, but this does not mean she does not identify with Bangladeshi nationalism, or being a single mother.

Majority/Minority and Power

Arjun Appadurai in his essay “Fear of Small Numbers” coherently explains how in order to construct an idea of “us”, of a collective, there needs to be a “them”. To have an idea for a collective, of Muslims/ Hindus/Bangladeshis/Pakistanis etc for a category to exist, there needs to be an opposite of so. When constituting who a Bangladeshi is, there needs to be knowledge regarding who a Bangladeshi is not. When construction of a national ethos is based on a singular language or religion, it creates a minority. (Appadurai,2006)

“The religious partitioning of the world produces a deeply misleading understanding of the people across the world and the diverse relations between them, and it also has the effect of magnifying one particular distinction between one person and another to the exclusion of all other important concerns.” (Sen,2006,p 76)

The nation state thrives on the idea of majorities. Nationalism in itself though it does promote a collective, it makes clear the idea of outsiders. The Partition and the Bangladeshi war are blood splattered events which gave rise to nationalities and groups. The minorities in context, were Muslims in India in the Partition era and then East Pakistanis prior to the birth of Bangladesh. In cases of minorities, the collective identity is of crucial importance. This importance is derived

from the power from joining together in a system that systematically oppressed them. Collectivism in the case of minorities is a matter of survival and identifying with others in the group is the first step of establishing this.

State Categorization

According to Bernard Cohn's "Census and identity politics" (1984), identity is something that is given to us. At the time of Partition, Munira knew her identity had been cemented as a Muslim. Regardless of whether or not she identified herself as Muslim, she was institutionally and on record considered a Muslim. Her religious identity set the path for a social class where she was automatically placed in and affiliated with.

Cohn's work is based on the solidification and the creation of identities in response to the census. Cohn writes that when the British imperial government asked Indians to identify themselves in a certain way, based on caste and religion etc. it brought into being a case of identity. Once the census was undertaken, it eventually led to the creation and in turn, solidification of identity. One that did not exist before.

In accordance to identity politics, the Partition meant Hindus belong in one nation and Muslims in another. As argued earlier, Their identity was solidified by violence and Two Nation Theory. (Chatterji, 1994) The Partition meant your key identity is your religion, not your birthplace or your family's. This was made clear to Munira, Fauzia when their families migrated to East Pakistan from India.

Similarly, Sarwari and Niddu recall vividly their memories of the Bangladeshi War of Independence and how their lives were endangered solely due to them being Bangali. The only part of their identity that mattered was their Bengaliness. Identity in this context, is not intrinsic, it is given or forced. In the context of 71, Sarwari and Niddu had members of their family murdered for being Bangali/Bangladeshi. They witnessed harrowing events and the oppression of East Pakistanis. Their primary identity became being Bangali. When asked now, they identify themselves as Bengalis first.

In contrast to his grandmother, Raiyan however is somewhat skeptical about nationalist identity and he thinks patriotism instills in people a skewed sense of morality as they only work towards what is good for their own country. In addition, his education and his time spent living abroad (7 years in total) has allowed him to formulate a more fluid sense of identity. It is to be noted that Raiyan's girlfriend who was born into a Hindu family and is American - has made him question their differences in identity. Perhaps adopting a more liberal and fluid sense of identity has allowed him to not be affected by their differences in nationalist and religious identity. His master status then no longer includes either of those identities.

Sneha, while holding an Indian passport was vehement about her identity as a Bangladeshi. From observing her, it was apparent to me that her friends would often bring up the topic of her Indian

citizenship which made her feel like an outsider. From an early age, Sneha has witnessed her family members taking an active interest in functions and organizations honouring her great grandfather. She is often asked about her family history and she is eloquent about how Bengali Nationalism is immensely important to her family. As such, she had no qualms nor was she hesitant when asked about her master status and identity.

Intragenerational Comparison

Munira, Fauzia and Niddu all belong to the same family. Munira and Fauzia witnessed the partition as children while Niddu was a child during the Bangladeshi war of Independence.

Munira, Fauzia and Niddu are all officially Bangladeshi citizens. Munira and Fauzia share between them, a sense of master status - of being Muslim. Niddu on the other hand claims she is Bangladeshi first and foremost. Munira, Fauzia and Niddu all lost family members in the Independence War of 1971, but being a child and losing her father - being Bangladeshi is at the core of who Niddu is. She is a professor of International Relations and thinks Benedict Anderson simplified things too much with the notion of 'imagined communities' (Anderson, 1936).

Sarwari and Raiyan are members of the same family. (Raiyan is one of Sarwari's grandsons) Sarwari proclaims herself as Bangladeshi while Raiyan's sense of nationalism is not as strong. This can perhaps be attributed to Sarwari's lifelong dedication to the development and betterment of her country - Bangladesh. Raiyan on the other hand has been exposed to globalized world since he was a child. As an international student in India and the USA, coupled with his ties to his American friends Raiyan has a more fluid take on nationalism. He considers himself Bangladeshi but his attachment to his country is based on his family, not to the nation state itself.

In both families, we see that there is a generational gap when it comes to master status. It is a combination of factors which perhaps led to this - childhood memories, age and lived experiences.

It is interesting to see that though Munira and Fauzia have had family members murdered during the time the Liberation War of 1971, when they were segregated against due to being Bangali they have still held onto their Muslim identity.

Name	Year of Birth	Nationality	Master Status
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Munira	1939	Bangladeshi	Muslim
Fauzia	1933	Bangladeshi	Muslim
Sarwari	1933	Bangladeshi	Bangladeshi
Niddu	1963	Bangladeshi	Bangladeshi
Raiyan	1993	Bangladeshi	Bangladeshi
Sneha	1993	Indian	Bangladeshi

Conclusion

My thesis has four main inter-related subject matters: the Partition, personal history, nationalism, and family.

My personal objective of writing this paper was to understand communalism and the nuances of regional differences. Growing up, I have always been aware that some Bangladeshi are not considered as not being Bangali enough and 'non Bengali' almost felt like an insult from some people. Why do these prejudices stick? As I scroll through newspaper articles, it is evident that religious intolerance is on the rise or perhaps now it receives more attention and criticism than ever before. It is thus doubly important to understand why people feel a sense of divide.

This paper has allowed me to understand to a very small degree why some of my respondents are wary and distrustful of whom they consider the "other". Identity is a double edged sword, while it brings with it a sense of solidarity and belonging - it also makes clear the idea of other groups. The separation of us and them.

My dissertation is highly focused and explores the opinions and lives of very few select members of a homogenous socio-economic class. They are educated, affluent and have inherited both social and economic capital from their families. They were also people who were given the choice to migrate and received administrative help in doing so.

The Partition has been an event crucial in the lives of millions of people in India. Those who were not touched by violence and trauma, were uprooted and their identities questioned Pre Partition. For my respondents - leaving India to move to East Pakistan meant leaving for a more promising future. This fight over resources resulted in the migration of Muslims who believed that more was to be gained by leaving West Bengal, both economically and socially. The idea of a nation for oneself and for one's peers - the promise of a place without segregation and a place to exist as "first class citizens" was the inimitable pull of the Partition. The decision promised to make spaces into nations for India's Hindu and Muslim populations. The Partition happened due to consciousness of one's religious identity being made one's primary identity or master status. The underlying problem of the Partition is thus - it forwent all other form of one's identity to prime one above others - religious identity.

The hardest part of writing this paper has been stopping. The partition and its consequences however nuanced seems to have become a part of my everyday life. As such it brings me to

wonder at a time where India's citizenship amendment act has been passed - was the partition ever over?

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Regardless, the segregation and trauma they have lived through in their lives cannot be discounted. The gendered telling of the Partition to me has been particularly important as the choice to move were made by the men of the family. This paper is not extensive enough nor my research adequate to truly comprehend the themes explored and touched upon.

In this paper, I have come to the conclusion that identity and history are extremely complex and complicated matters subject to time and social consciousness. The eldest of my respondents had no interest in speaking about master status and nationalism while my youngest respondent due to his Westernized liberal education rejected the notion of a nationalist identity for the most part.

It is also interesting to note that even within close knit families there is a difference in terms of nationalist and religious identity. Lived experiences thus seem to be the key to understanding people.

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