

**Forced Migration and Ethnic Cleansing in Lahore in 1947:  
Some First Person Accounts**

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## **Introduction**

This paper examines the exit of Hindus and Sikhs from Lahore at the time of Partition in 1947. Until the beginning of the 1940s, Lahore was celebrated as a paragon of communal harmony. A religiously mixed and varied population had continuously lived in it ever since it fell to the Afghans in the early 11<sup>th</sup> century. According to the 1941 population census, the total population of the Municipality of Lahore was 671,659, out of which Muslims constituted a majority of 64.50 per cent. Except for a small Christian community and some individuals from other minor groups, the rest were Hindus and Sikhs who together made up 36 per cent of the population. In the Lahore District as a whole the situation was similar. Muslims were 60.62 per cent while Hindus and Sikhs together formed 39.38 per cent of the population. The Hindus and Sikhs, however, owned the overwhelming bulk of the property in the city and in the district.<sup>1</sup> Communal tensions began to rise in the winter of 1945-46 when provincial elections were held. In March 1947 the first communal clashes took place in Lahore. When Partition took place, a few months later in mid-August, Lahore had been emptied of almost all the Hindus and Sikhs. The demographic consequences of such change were indeed profound and everlasting.

The departing Hindus and Sikhs left behind many remnants – buildings, residential colonies and charitable institutions - that are reminiscent of their once very visible presence here. From time to time official policy has sought to ‘Islamise’ the names of places, localities and buildings bearing non-Muslim names. It is difficult to assess the success rate of such attempts, but it seems that for some time to come the Hindu-Sikh heritage will continue to be echoed in popular usage. Especially places which continue to serve the people of Lahore such as Sir Ganga Ram Hospital, Gulab Devi Hospital, Jan Ki Devi Hospital, Dayal Singh College and Dayal Singh Library (some years ago a fire destroyed many of the books in it) are likely to retain these names.

A minuscule upper caste Hindu minority comprising a few hundred people stayed on in 1947, however. Most people did not know of its existence. In December 1992 the infamous demolition of the Babri mosque at the hands of Hindu fanatics took place in Ayodhya in the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh. They also killed many Muslims. The reaction in Lahore was fierce. Angry crowds went around on a rampage. The old Hindu temples were razed. According to an article written by Bhavna Vij in *The Indian Express* of 3 May 2000, some

Hindus were also murdered in Lahore. She interviewed Surya Prakash Sharma who confided in her that he now uses a Christian name, Peter Joseph, for himself to escape easy detection. So do his wife and children. Many other Hindus have assumed the same strategy or converted to Christianity.<sup>2</sup>

### Purpose of the study

This study seeks an answer to the following main question: *What happened in Lahore in 1947, how and why?*

In this connection, it is also interesting to ponder what type of society Lahore became in the post-Partition era. Two questions are therefore posed to shed light on that theme:

1. How did forced migration and ethnic cleansing impact on the demographic structure and cultural identity of Lahore?
2. Did Lahore become 'homogeneous' after Partition?

### Research problem

On 23 March 1940 the All-India Muslim League demanded in its annual session at Lahore the creation of a separate Muslim state (s) in the Muslim-majority areas of India. It contested the provincial elections in the winter of 1945-46 on such a platform and received a clear mandate from the Muslim voters in its favour. Not surprisingly the majority of Hindus and Sikhs were opposed to such a division. During 1946 communal riots between Hindus and Muslims took place in Calcutta, Noakhali, Bihar and some other places. Harrowing scenes of barbarism and bestiality were enacted, but on a limited scale. Punjab, a Muslim-majority province with substantial Hindu and Sikh minorities, escaped unscathed that first round of communal violence but the horrors that lay in store for it a few months later completely dwarfed events elsewhere on the Subcontinent.

From the beginning of 1947 relations in Punjab between, on the one hand, the Hindu-Sikh community (in the context of the 1947 riots Hindus and Sikhs can be considered one community) and, on the other, the Muslim community (at that time comprising all sects and tendencies) became tense as British rule in the Subcontinent neared its end. In early March

communal clashes occurred in Lahore and immediately spread to other parts of the province. As the days and weeks passed the attacks became more frequent, more pitiless and more organised. They continued until the end of that year. The most intense period was the couple of months before and after mid-August. The writ of the state could easily be flouted and anarchy and chaos prevailed. In typical Hobbesian terms Lahore and the Punjab had lapsed into the dreaded 'state of nature'. However, instead of a 'war of all against all', as Hobbes conceived of in the state of nature, a 'war of communities' began to rage. The crucial question everyone wanted an answer to was undoubtedly the following: Will Punjab go as a whole to Pakistan, as the Muslim League was hoping, or, will it be divided between Pakistan and India, as the Sikh leaders and the Indian National Congress demanded? No decision to allocate the whole province to Pakistan or to divide it between the two states would have satisfied all the three groups. For the inhabitants of Lahore the life and death question was, of course: On what side of the international border will Lahore end up?

It was indeed the most important city of north-western India, having been a provincial capital under the Mughals, the capital of the Sikh kingdom and again the provincial capital of Punjab under the British. Located on the eastern banks of River Ravi and situated more or less in the upper middle part of the united Punjab, it had for centuries enjoyed great economic, political and military significance. Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs – all had valid historical, cultural and emotional claims and ties to it. Therefore the battle for Lahore was fought on all fronts and by all means: political, legal, brute force and terror. In the final round Lahore was awarded to Pakistan. Suddenly it became a border city. It retained its status as a provincial capital, but that of a truncated Punjab, namely the Pakistani West Punjab.

The clash over Lahore epitomises the human tragedy that Partition imposed on the Punjabis. At the end of 1947 Lahore had transformed from a multi-communal city into an almost exclusively 'Muslim' one. This pattern of demographic change was by no means unique. All traces of an indigenous Muslim presence were wiped out from several cities in eastern Punjab, which went to India, while in western Punjabi cities Hindus and Sikhs became conspicuous by their absence. The fate of those who lived in the rural areas was no better. The sole exception was the town of Malerkotla in East Punjab whose Muslim population was spared by the Sikh hordes because more than two hundred years earlier the Muslim nawab of Malerkotla had shown mercy to the minor children of Guru Gobind Singh, in defiance of the orders of the Mughal state.

Such an exception apart, the first real experiment in ethnic cleansing after the Second World War took place in Punjab. The earliest estimates put the figure at 200,000 to 500,000 killed. Later the figure of one million was mentioned in many works. More recent estimates put the figure in the neighbourhood of two million killed. The exact number will never be known. Some 12 to 15 million people were forcibly transferred between the two states. It created the biggest, single refugee situation in history. Hundreds of thousands of women were abducted by men of a different religion, of which at least 75,000 were raped.<sup>3</sup> The distinguishing feature of the South Asian, or more correctly and accurately Punjabi, holocaust was that all the three religious groups were its victims. Ironically its perpetrators belonged also to all of them.

#### Existing literature and information on the communal riots in Lahore

The Partition riots have been a taboo in official Indian and Pakistani historiographies, *although the standard official versions of the events, which led to Partition, are documented in great detail by both sides*. Many classic works of modern South Asian short story, novel and poetry deal with the Partition saga, however. What the constraints of official correctness and strategy have prevented scholarly research from probing became an avenue for some of the most sensitive and creative works in literature.

From the Indian side, two reports on the Punjab riots compiled soon after Partition are available. S. Gurbachan Singh Talib collected data for the Sikh religious organisation, the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC), and presented them in his book, *Muslim League Attack on Sikhs and Hindus in the Punjab 1947*. Talib argues that the Muslim League wanted the whole of Punjab and, therefore, planned the expulsion by all means of Sikhs and Hindus from it. The first manifestation of such a design was the massacre of Sikhs and Hindus in the Rawalpindi division in early March 1947.<sup>4</sup>

He seeks to demonstrate that the Muslim League – its top leaders including Jinnah, and the regional and local leaders and cadres, especially the Muslim National Guard, were involved in such a grand conspiracy and, except for Abdul Ghaffar Khan and his followers, the Muslims community as a whole participated in that project. In this conspiracy the predominantly Muslim police played a leading role. According to Talib, the ‘total number of police constables in Punjab were 24,095, out of whom 17,848 were Muslims, 6167 Hindus

and Sikhs combined and 80 Europeans and Anglo-Indians'.<sup>5</sup> The Islamic call to jihad and the concept of *kafir* (unbeliever) employed to demonise Sikhs and Hindus furnished the psycho-cultural bases for the aggression against non-Muslims. He quotes several provocative slogans and statements of Muslim leaders giving the call to violence and elimination of non-Muslims from the future Pakistan.<sup>6</sup>

Talib also alleges that although Muslims were in an overall minority in eastern Punjab they were the first to use mob violence and terror against Sikhs and Hindus. Especially in Amritsar such attacks started already in February.<sup>7</sup> In an interview given to the present author, Mrs Jasjit Sharma gave great details of attacks initiated against Hindus and Sikhs by Muslim mobs in Amritsar. She remembered that the Muslim police openly assisted those mobs. Retired Colonel V.K. Kapur, who was only eleven years old at that time, had traumatic memories of communal riots in Amritsar, but believed that all communities were guilty of those crimes.

As regards the situation in Lahore, Talib presents graphic details in several pages of many instances of killing, burning and looting by Muslims. Allegedly Nawab Iftikhar Hussain Mamdot, Sardar Shaukat Hayat, Mian Iftikharuddin, Begum Shah Nawaz and other Muslim leaders directed the attacks on the Sikhs and Hindus in Lahore.<sup>8</sup> Further, that the predominantly Muslim administration aided and abetted the attackers. Among them Magistrate G.M. Cheema was the most notorious.<sup>9</sup> It is interesting to note that Ian Talbot mentions a Hindu counterpart of Cheema who let hell loose upon the Muslims in another city, '... Sita Ram, the Deputy Superintendent of Police, Ambala, supervised an assault on a refugee train on 1 September which claimed 1,000 lives....'<sup>10</sup>

Talib informs that the district magistrate of Lahore, Mr Eustace, issued a press report in which he alleged that the Muslim goondas (criminals) of Lahore had received from their co-religionist counterparts in Amritsar a packet containing *churia(n)s* (glass bangles) and mehndi (henna). It was a bizarre antic meant to shame them for their unmanliness and cowardice at not finishing off Hindus and Sikhs, even when Lahore was a Muslim-majority city. The Muslim goondas were incensed by that insult. Thereafter they indulged in a spree of stabbing and killing.<sup>11</sup> Talib does not mention on what date Eustace made this announcement, but from G. D. Khosla's account of the same event it seems that it occurred sometime between 10 and 13 May. On 9 May the Muslim criminals of Amritsar dramatically accelerated their attacks on non-Muslims and on 14 May mayhem broke out in Lahore.<sup>12</sup>

Any mention of counter-violence by Sikh and Hindus in Lahore is absent in Talib's account, however. He also rejects the counter-charge that the Sikhs had hatched a conspiracy to empty eastern Punjab of Muslims so that their co-religionists uprooted from the western part could be relocated there and a compact Sikh majority achieved in contiguous areas.<sup>13</sup> The Sikh reprisals against Muslims in East Punjab are explained merely as a reaction, which assumed alarming proportions only after Pakistan had come into being on 14 August. It is further asserted that a million Sikh and Hindu refugees had already in April arrived from West Punjab, mainly from the Rawalpindi division, to the various camps in the eastern part following the first major large-scale attacks in that part in early March.<sup>14</sup>

In the other compilation of data on the partition riots, *Stern Reckoning*, Justice G. D. Khosla, formerly of the Punjab High Court, traces the history of Hindu-Muslim tension and mutual suspicion to at least the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>15</sup> The implication is that the events of 1947 had deep historical and religious roots. His findings affirm, however, that the Muslim League, its leaders and cadres, initiated the riots that continued as a one-sided affair until mid August. The attacks on Muslims in eastern Punjab against Muslims were a reaction to the preceding events in West Punjab.<sup>16</sup>

From the Pakistani side, comparable extensive reports on the riots have not been prepared by any religious or political organisation. Chaudhri Muhammad Ali was one of the two members of the Steering Committee, which was responsible to the Partition Council for the administrative tasks involved in the Partition process. He represented Pakistan. Later he was prime minister of Pakistan during 1955-56. In his book, *The Emergence of Pakistan*, he alleges that the Sikh leadership at the highest level, especially the Maharajas of Patiala and Kapurthala, were involved in a macabre conspiracy to wipe out all Muslims from East Punjab. Hindus also took part in the killing orgies but the main culprits were Sikhs.<sup>17</sup> As regards the partisan behaviour of the police in the eastern areas, he quotes a British officer of the Punjab Boundary Force who remarked, 'There was no case on record of a Sikh or Hindu policeman having shot any one except a Muslim.'<sup>18</sup> He quotes another British official:

On 15 August the day of liberation was strangely celebrated in the Punjab. During the afternoon a Sikh mob paraded a number of Muslim women naked through the streets of Amritsar, raped them and hacked some of them to pieces with kirpans and burned the others alive'.<sup>19</sup>

About the attacks on Hindus and Sikhs in Lahore, Chaudhri Muhammad Ali maintains that those were reprisals that took place only after refugees arrived with their tales of woe from eastern Punjab. There was no organised plan to attack non-Muslims in Lahore.<sup>20</sup>

The former chief justice of the Pakistan supreme court, Muhammad Munir, who was one of the two members nominated by the Muslim League to the Punjab Boundary Commission and was therefore uniquely involved in a direct and personal manner in the very last official exercise under the auspices of the colonial government to translate Partition into a legal reality, made some revelations on that period in his book, *From Jinnah to Zia*. He admits that the first large-scale communal attack in Punjab occurred in the Rawalpindi region against Sikhs and Hindus and its perpetrators were Muslims. He points out, however, that when Jinnah was informed about those attacks he instructed an immediate cessation to the atrocities.<sup>21</sup> (this assertion is controversial. The Muslim League leaders are generally believed to have said nothing publicly on this matter.<sup>22</sup>)

Munir reiterates the charge that the Sikhs had a plan to eradicate all traces of a Muslim presence in the eastern parts of Punjab, but that it came into effect only after the Rawalpindi massacres.<sup>23</sup> Referring to the status of Lahore, he alleges that the Sikhs tried to bribe the members of the Boundary Commission into awarding it to India. Further, that the Chairman Sir Cyril Radcliffe had decided to award Lahore to India, but his (Munir's) spirited protest led to a reversal of that decision.<sup>24</sup>

The famous Sikh writer and historian Khushwant Singh wrote an article 'Last Days in Lahore: From the brittle security of an elite rooftop, a view of a city burning'' on the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Partition. According to him, the escalation in rioting occurred in mid-June. He observes:

The score was invariably in favour of Muslims, the chief reason for Muslims having the upper hand was that the umpires were Muslims. 80 per cent of Punjab Police was Muslim; the state government was Muslim-dominated. It was the same story all over western Punjab. Hindus and Sikhs had begun pulling out of Muslim-dominated towns to Lahore. And finding Lahore equally unsafe, trudged on to Amritsar and towns of eastern Punjab where Hindus and Sikhs outnumbered Muslims.

That June afternoon of 1947 remains etched in my mind. I had returned from the high court when I heard the uproar. I ran up to the roof of my apartment. The sun burnt down fiercely over the city. From the centre billowed out a huge cloud of dense, black smoke. I did not have to make guesses; the Hindu-Sikh mohalla of Shahalmi was going up in flames. Muslim goondas had broken the back of non-Muslim resistance. After Shahalmi, the fight

went of out of the Hindus and Sikhs of Lahore. We remained mute spectators to Muslim League supporters marching in disciplined phalanxes chanting: *Pakistan Ka Naara Kya? La-Ilaha-Ililalah* (What is the Slogan of Pakistan? It is that there is no God but Allah, author's note).

The turmoil had little impact on the well to do that lived around Lawrence Gardens (today's Bagh-e-Jinnah), and on either side of the canal, which ran on the eastern end of Lahore. We went about in our cars to our offices, spent evenings playing tennis at the Cosmopolitan or the Gymkhana Club, had dinner parties where Scotch which cost Rs. 11 per bottle flowed like waters of the Ravi. In elite residential areas, the old bonhomie of Hindu-Muslim bhai bhaisim (Hindus and Muslims are brothers, author's note) continued....

The juggernaut gathered speed. Hindus and Sikhs began to sell properties and slip out towards eastern Punjab. One day I found my neighbour on one side had painted in large Urdu calligraphy *Parsee Ka Makan* (Parsee's house, author's note). One on the other side had a huge cross painted in white. Unmarked Hindu-Sikh houses were thus marked out. We were within walking distance from Mozang, a centre of Muslim goondas....

By July 1947, stories of violence against Muslims in east Punjab circulated in Lahore, and a trickle of refugees flew westwards. This further roused Muslim fury....A week before Independence, Chris Everett, head of the CID in Punjab ... advised me to get out of Lahore. Escorted by six Baluch constables, my wife and I took the train to Kalka to join our two children who had been sent ahead to their grand-parents in Kasauli.... I arrived in Delhi on August 13, 1947.<sup>25</sup>

As regards Mozang, which Khushwant Singh remembers as a stronghold of Muslim goondas, two incidents have left an indelible impression on the memory of many people from that time, an organised attack on a Sikh Gurdawara and the killing of a poor Sikh capenter. The two stories have been told again and again and are likely to be repeated as long as those elders are alive. The massacre at the Gurdawara is described in the interview with Mujahid Taj Din, a participant in that infamous assault. It appears at the end of this paper under the section on interviews. My mother narrated the second incident to me. She died in 1990. I have subsequently checked its details with my father and other elders. It is the following.

On 12<sup>th</sup> August a big, hefty Sikh came riding a motorcycle down Temple Road in Mozang. As he approached Chowk Bhoondpura, where our old house is located and where I (the author) was born on 24 February that year, the local goondas tried to attack him. When they noticed that he carried a gun they quickly dispersed. Half an hour later, another Sikh, this time an aged, emaciated carpenter, came down the same route on a dingy, old bicycle. Like most daily workers he was carrying his afternoon meal wrapped up in a dirty cloth, called *potli* in Punjabi parlance, which was tied to the handle of his bike. He seemed to be on way to work as usual, oblivious of the big political game going on at that time. This time the same roughnecks pounced upon him. One of them stabbed him. He screamed and tried to run away.

Seeing a tonga (horse-driven carriage) nearby he tried to climb on to it. The tonga-driver kicked him and he fell to the ground. His assailants now caught up with him and dealt some more blows. He died screaming for help and mercy.

### **Hypotheses and questions**

The following two alternative hypotheses and some common questions related to them are examined to shed light on the processes of forced migration and ethnic cleansing from Lahore. The two hypotheses do not necessarily exclude each other and a mix of the two may be found to be at the bottom of the Partition riots in Lahore.

#### Hypothesis one

A Muslim plan to eliminate Hindus and Sikhs from Lahore existed at least from the time when the Muslim League began its 'direct action' in early 1947. Its top leaders, cadres and ordinary Muslims executed it in a concerted and organised manner without any meaningful resistance from the Hindus and Sikhs of Lahore.

#### Hypothesis two

A battle for Lahore began in March 1947 as a 'war of communities' between the Hindu-Sikh and the Muslim communities. It was fought initially, more or less, without any clear plan of action and amid uncertainty about Lahore's future status. A number of political, administrative and legal decisions in early June, however, tilted the balance of power in favour of the Muslims. Thereafter a conspiracy to eliminate Hindus and Sikhs from Lahore began to form and led to their forced migration. The result was ethnic cleansing.

#### Questions

1. What were the chief characteristics of the processes of forced migration and ethnic cleansing in Lahore?
2. What events acted as triggers to the processes of forced migration and ethnic cleansing in Lahore?

3. How reliable is the oral history technique, and what explanations do the interviewees provide regarding the riots in Lahore?
4. Why did communal massacres occur in Lahore?

### Method

The case study method is adopted in the present investigation. A case study of a particular city - isolated from the overall Punjab situation or, for that matter, the whole of British India - cannot furnish a basis for a general explanation of the Partition syndrome. It can, however, be useful as a means of acquiring deeper insights and understanding of communal violence and forced migration in a particular situation. Therefore the focus in this present enquiry is on describing and analysing the events in Lahore as a specific *process* of demographic transformation. By demographic transformation is meant change in social and economic structure as well as the religious composition of Lahore. The study has also been used as a test-site for a theory of forced migration and ethnic cleansing. The enquiry benefits from the case study strategy only in a limited sense, however. I have relied primarily on oral history to put together the history of the Lahore riots. An examination of government records will be conducted in a larger study that will soon follow.

There is as yet no proper account and analysis of the specific Lahore situation. I have tried to put together the story of Lahore riots with the help mainly of interviews conducted in Delhi and Bombay (Mumbai rather) between 18-26 October 1999, with some Hindus and Sikhs who survived that ordeal and a unique interview with a Muslim who took part in attacks upon non-Muslims in Lahore. It was decided that direct quotations should be used liberally from the existing writings with a view to conveying the original impression and feeling. I started wondering about Partition already during my college years (1964-68) and have been talking about it to people ever since. Many of those conversations have helped me sharpen the focus of the present study. Therefore this paper does not conform strictly to the orthodox rules and norms of reporting the sources. Trying to do that would be quite impossible. I have, however, used such sources most sparingly.

### The oral history technique

Oral history or the personal narrative in the form of an open-ended extended interview with persons directly and personally witness to or victims of traumatic events has been tried effectively as a research technique in several recent works on Partition. The present study also utilises it. In my opinion the outstanding virtue of this technique is that it presents a personal, perhaps emotive, insight into the life story of the interviewee. He/she is not treated merely as a source or object of information but as a subject who is intrinsic to the story he/she tells. Each such story is a living history to be read on its own merits.

I let the interviewees narrate their story at the own leisure. The average length of the interview was one hour. The questions were kept to the minimum. Altogether 15 interviews were conducted. They are presented below, mainly as complete transcripts (that is, of material relevant to the topic) or in short excerpts. I tried to encompass a fairly broad class and social representation, but the truly poor people who perhaps suffered most could not be located within those eight days which were at my disposal. Efforts were made in particular to find some woman who could share her experience with me. The mother of a close friend of an Indian colleague in Bombay turned out to be from Lahore, but when we contacted her the old lady refused to grant me an interview. She had lost all her kith and kin in 1947 and, I suspect, found it particularly difficult to open up old wounds before a Muslim from Lahore.

My younger brother Zubair Ghazi conducted an interview on my behalf on 2 and 25 February 2000 with a key participant in the attacks on non-Muslims in Mozang. The structure of that interview is slightly different in that the intention was also to find out how in retrospect the interviewee reflected upon his actions.

There is, of course, a problem regarding the imbalance in communal representation in the present study. I have not interviewed an equally broad range of Muslim opinion of Lahore on those riots. In formal terms this is true, but I found it expedient for a short study like this to present the point of view of the Muslims in a summary form under the section 'The attitude of the Muslims of Lahore to the expulsion of Hindus and Sikhs'. It should be emphasised that the present study of the Lahore riots is based primarily on the experiences of those who had to flee against their will or desire. It seeks to capture important dimensions and facets of those experiences.

### **Forced migration, ethnic cleansing and demographic transformation**

Migration of individuals, groups, communities and even whole societies has occurred throughout the ages and across all the regions and continents of the world. A recent book on international migration proffers the following definition: ‘Migration is a spatial phenomenon. People move from one place to another, alone or together with others, for a short visit or for a long period of time, over a long or a short distance.’<sup>26</sup> Such an all-inclusive definition covers all imaginable forms of migration, but it is not a very sharp tool for distinguishing between different types of migration. It does not tell us whether migration was voluntary or caused under duress.

Moreover, it is useful to distinguish between, on the one hand, ordinary migration which follows either from the gradual socio-economic transformations underway in society or from catastrophes such as an earthquake or flood and, on the other, a politically imposed migration (hereafter referred to as forced migration) which takes place when existing structures of authority and order cease to function efficiently or collapse suddenly or become manifestly unreliable, biased and partisan, and, as a result, the existing social order is disrupted in a manner that a certain part of the population can no longer feel secure and is forced to flee. Whereas gradual socio-economic change and natural catastrophes affect their objects more or less randomly and are structural in nature, forced migration is imposed by an agency.

Writing on the specific problem of refugee flows Zolberg, Suhrke and Aguayo emphasise the central role played by violence in migration. They present three categories of refugees: activists (opponents within the political elite, dissenters and rebels), targets (individuals belonging to special groups singled out for violent action) and victims (those caught up randomly in the cross fire or exposed to generalised violence respectively).<sup>27</sup> Their research is presented in a survey-like account of many historical and contemporary situations, in which revolutionary upheavals and religious and nationalist struggles are held responsible for the refugee flows. What is lacking in their work is a theoretical argument linking refugee flows to specific structure/agency relations and the economic, social, political, psychological and cultural contexts in which violence causes refugee flows.<sup>28</sup>

The American journalist Roy Gutman notes that the Serbian ultra-nationalists invented the term ‘ethnic cleansing’ as a euphemism to conceal random slaughter, arbitrary executions,

systematic rape and castration, wholesale deportation and similar barbaric crimes which they committed against predominantly Muslims but also Croats in Bosnia-Herzegovina during 1992-3.<sup>29</sup> The Yugoslav army, with the full connivance of the Serbian government of Milosevic, supervised those activities. Some 200,000 to 250,000 Muslims perished during that period and many times more were driven away from their ancestral homes. Hitherto notwithstanding conflicting interpretations of history and of religious faith a certain degree of actual intermixing had occurred through inter-marriages and adoption of cosmopolitan values and ideological notions by sections of society. The Serbian ultra-nationalists aimed their fury and wrath at demolishing all traces of such hybridity. The intention was undoubtedly to eradicate all traces of a people from a region considered fit only for 'pure' Serbs.<sup>30</sup>

From our own vantage point, we can observe that the euphemistic connotations of 'ethnic cleansing' have quickly been lost and the phrase has entered currency in both media usage and in scholarly writings as a description of large-scale killings and displacement of people, more or less as a synonym for genocide. Genocide classically means the destruction in whole or in part of a people.<sup>31</sup> It aims at the physical extermination of a community. Thus for example the Nazis' 'final solution' aimed at the liquidation of the Jews and gypsies rather than simply their expulsion from the Third Reich. On the other hand, the creation of Israel imposed forced migration upon the Palestinians and resulted in substantial ethnic cleansing. Therefore, ethnic cleansing can be understood as the wider and more general term relevant to understand the implications of contested nationalism. It has more to do with the security concerns of states and nation building of apprehensive groups.

One can say that genocide is a product of a more severe, pathological state of mind that comes about as a result of a rigorous implementation plan and the capability to execute it. In many situations it is impossible to say whether a certain case of collective violence and aggression should be described as genocide or merely ethnic cleansing. A mix of the two is not unusual. The following definition of ethnic cleansing can, nevertheless, be useful to distinguish it from genocide:

*Ethnic cleansing is a more or less coordinated use of extreme terror, including burning, killing, raping and other such means employed by an agent to empty a specific territorial space of unwanted individuals and groups. Whereas all acts of genocide result in*

*the destruction of a people in whole or in part and include ethnic cleansing, ethnic cleansing can be achieved with less drastic and more varied means.*

### Why society degenerates into a war of ‘all against all’

The collapse of authority or the state has been a nightmare for most political theorists. This is true not only of mainstream Western but also Hindu and Muslim thinkers.<sup>32</sup> Among founders of modern political theory, Thomas Hobbes in particular portrayed the collapse of authority in the most dismal terms. In such a situation, civil war and destruction follow inevitably because left on their own men do not trust each other and resort to pre-emptive action against one another to protect themselves from injury and death. It results in constant conflict and thus life is ‘short, brutish and nasty’. He classically recommended an all-powerful Sovereign who could impose his will on the members of society, prevent them from attacking each other and thus obviate the infamous ‘war of all against all’.<sup>33</sup>

It is intriguing that Hobbes did not reflect deeply upon the possibility and consequences of what were to happen if the Sovereign did not cease to exist altogether nor remain all-powerful but became less effective or indifferent to his function. In his deductive approach, such a situation could not arise because the Sovereign would no longer be sovereign if he were to lose control over the people. In real life situations, however, such a possibility does occur, and not too uncommonly. Moreover, he was thinking in terms of individuals as free agents kept together only by the superior will of the Sovereign. Presumably he was thinking of such individuals as belonging to the same cultural or ethnic stock and yet unable to live in peace without the mighty State or Sovereign compelling them to do so.

### And why a ‘war of communities’ breaks out?

A situation in which different linguistic and cultural units can co-exist peacefully through voluntary choice was beyond Hobbes’ pessimistic and suspicious theory of human nature. Even less pessimistic theories of human nature find ethnic and communal diversity a challenge for establishing a stable and durable democratic political community.<sup>34</sup> As a general rule, one can say that ethnic diversity (ethnic here is used as a blanket-term to cover not only ethnic but also religious, sectarian, linguistic and other cultural factors) does pose more

problems of adjustment and accommodation than 'homogeneity'. If people are conscious of their distinctive markers and consider them significant while relating with one another then even if routinely they interact with each other in a peaceable manner some amount of tension around communal lines can crop up if proper means are not available to settle disputes.<sup>35</sup>

Leo Kuper asserts that a plural society (to be distinguished from a pluralist society, which means simply diversity in terms of ethnic or cultural) with persistent and pervasive cleavages deriving from racial, ethnic and religious differences can succumb to genocidal aggression during periods of conflict. Often the cleavages are concomitant with inequalities in economic advancement and opportunities and in political clout.<sup>36</sup> In addition cultural practices and symbols underline the inequalities between the various groups. Often the exacerbation of communal tension takes place during colonial intervention. Such societies may remain peaceful for long periods of time, but under stress they can suddenly implode. The result can be a genocide of the vulnerable group.<sup>37</sup> Other writers have employed terms such as deeply divided societies, segmented societies and so on to describe similar phenomena. In contrast to the idea of a plural society, there is the so-called homogeneous society. It is supposed to possess all the ingredients of cohesiveness and natural solidarity. Such societies are believed to qualify best as consolidated nation-states.<sup>38</sup> However, very few such pure 'societies' exist anywhere in the world. Iceland probably comes nearest to complete homogeneity. Thus most attempts to create pure nation-states have been accompanied by aggression and violence to expunge accretions or impurities. Historically South Asia, particularly Punjab, would not qualify as a homogeneous society in any sense of the word.

In between these two extremes there can be a grand variety of mixes. For example, a composite, pluralist society could be one in which several ethno-cultural groups co-exist peacefully and as more or less equals. In its ideal form it is conceived as a multicultural society. Each group enjoys a free cultural space to which it can withdraw to practise its peculiar traditions, but all interact on a regular basis in the public sphere in accordance with mutually recognised rules and regulations.<sup>39</sup> Theorists of a multicultural society do not present it as something which actually exists but as a framework for generating innovative policy to manage communal tension in contemporary immigrant-rich western societies. The implication is that ethnic diversity is problematic and therefore a new type of society has to emerge based on multicultural premises.

### **The theory**

Now, another type of society, more complex than either the pure type of plural, deeply divided or the composite, pluralist society can also be imagined. In fact one can assume that it should be fairly widespread in many parts of the world. Such a society will need to be of a fairly long historical standing so as to possess its own peculiar characteristics. It may comprise a mix of deeply divided, plural as well as composite, pluralist social enmeshing and intertwining features. Rather than a strictly hierarchical social order constituted by layered racial or religious segments, each a separate entity but ranked in an increasing scale or degree of stigma the lower it is placed in the hierarchical stratification, with the one at the bottom bearing the greatest stigma as was the case of Apartheid South Africa and prevails in less obvious forms in some Latin American societies, the social order may represent two or more, more or less, comparable constituent cultural structures. Each such unit may possess its own internal social ranking, but in relation to each other they may maintain some sort of social balance. They may also interact regularly in the public sphere and may have achieved together considerable social capital and goodwill at the individual and other levels notwithstanding economic inequalities and cultural practices that routinely emphasise not only differences but also the inferior status of the economically less advanced group (s). Such a social order will constitute a single cultural whole, notably if it shares the same language, even if its constituent units possess their distinctive features. Normally such a complex society should be able to contain communal conflict from getting out of hand. Society in undivided Punjab in general and particularly in Lahore could be considered as interfaces between plural, deeply divided as well as pluralist, social and cultural entities. Such societies can be susceptible to communal provocations but simultaneously capable of managing them through recognised and accepted ways and means.

However, the more crucial thing to note is that ethnic identity itself is a social construct and not simply something given.<sup>40</sup> This is not to argue that ethnic markers are simply a concoction or invention and they do not exist in reality. On the contrary, differences in physical appearance and cultural variation are more of a rule than an exception. Throughout history many social conflicts have found expression around lines of differences

based on such factors. In lesser forms such differences may be reproduced as social prejudices and denigrating jokes and so on. Yet the same differences can exist for long periods of time without society degenerating into destructive and violent confrontation. What may be considered threatening and dangerous at one point in time may not be perceived so at another point in time. Thus the Catholic-Protestant difference once wreaked havoc upon western European societies. It has lost political significance in most parts of contemporary western Europe, except perhaps in Northern Ireland.

It is therefore reasonable to assume that ethno-cultural differences are socially constructed into confrontational political programmes of actions. Rapidly changing circumstances can strain the traditional balance. Among such changes those wrought by modernisation and modernistic education create new demands and aspirations among the upwardly mobile sections of society. Their frustration at not being able to achieve their goals can create a constituency for agitational politics. Usually political entrepreneurs, such as politicians and intellectuals, claiming to represent the grievances, fears and interests of their group, translate the differences into simplistic, mutually exclusive opposite categories such as 'We' and 'They'. 'We' become the bearer of all virtue and goodness and 'They' that of vice and evil. However, some amount of propaganda, demonising and dehumanising the 'Other', has to proceed before 'They' can be targeted for recurring and pre-meditated violence.

Occasions when these political entrepreneurs can popularise the We - They dichotomy are, of course, periods when political uncertainty and rapid change prevail. Most typically the disintegration of the state and the social order preserved by it is one such typical situation. Suddenly people can find themselves exposed and vulnerable. Under such circumstances, political entrepreneurs can impact upon the collective anxiety and neurosis of group members with appropriate ethno-nationalist rhetoric and ideology thus galvanizing them into action against the perceived threat. In extreme situations a release of collective psychosis can take the shape of systematic and organised mass killings and other atrocities. Ideological motivation, fear, vengeance, a feeling that an opportunity to escape economic domination and exploitation exists, the desire to loot and plunder, and a variety of other factors may be at the root of collective and individual acts of terror and brutality against the other group whose members thus as a whole become indiscriminate targets. This is not to suggest that the other group remains passive and offers no resistance. It might, but in a particular situation it may be

outnumbered, outgunned and so on. All depends ultimately on the context, the situation and the overall balance of power at a particular time.

In the era of nationalism and nation-states it is not uncommon that the process of carving new states out of old empires or bigger states involves wholesale expulsion under duress of people the victorious group does not want to include among the nation.<sup>41</sup> For doing this efficiently, access to organised administrative and punitive structures can be a decisive advantage. The prerogative of sovereignty, which states enjoy under international law, enables them to make, with the help of international borders and border control systems, forced migration and ethnic cleansing permanent and irreversible. The final result may mean a complete destruction of the demographic structure upon which the old, traditional balance between plural and pluralist social entities rested.

### **Lahore: A Sketch**

The legendary origin of Lahore is traced to *Lav* or *Loh* a son of Rama, the king of Ayodhya and the hero of *Ramayana*, the second major Hindu epic from the pre-historical period. At the time of the first Ghaznavid invasion in the beginning of the 11<sup>th</sup> century a fortified city existed in the same place where the old walled city is located today.<sup>42</sup> From that time onwards, Lahore remained under Muslim rule and a Muslim majority was always to be found in it. Until the British takeover in mid 18<sup>th</sup> century, Lahore was ravaged and razed time and again by Turks, Afghans, Persians and Sikhs. A Hindu, and later Sikh, presence can also be traced in it throughout the post-Ghaznavid period. Real glory as a great city was attained by Lahore under Akbar (d. 1605) and thereafter it remained a prominent provincial capital of the Mughal Empire.<sup>43</sup>

It seems that notwithstanding periodic anarchy and disorder which followed when central authority weakened and petty warlords and chiefs fought each other for control over taxes and other dues, things returned to normality and communal concord was restored. The interplay between various sufi, sadhu and sant movements of those times created a scope for peaceful coexistence and a fair degree of interaction between the various religious communities, especially during festivals and holy occasions. The famous gay love affair between the sufi-poet, Lal Hussain, and the Hindu Brahmin boy, Madho, during the 16<sup>th</sup> century is some indication of the pluralistic environment of that time. To this day an annual

festival is held to commemorate their union. Both are buried in the same tomb and thousands of people flock to it.<sup>44</sup> This is not to deny that dogmatic rules and regulations were also observed at all levels of society, especially by the clerics and upper strata of each community and communal boundaries were marked clearly through manifest rites, rituals and practices.

In 1799 the Sikh leader Ranjit Singh defeated the Muslim garrison at Lahore and made it the capital of his kingdom. After his death in 1839, a battle of succession began among the various claimants to the throne. Some Sikh chieftains began to extort heavy taxes and other dues from parts of the walled city in which they maintained their military presence. Chaos and disorder prevailed. The British were waiting in the wings to march on to Lahore. On 29 March 1849 a treaty was signed between Maharaja Dalip Singh and the British whereby the kingdom passed into the possession of the English East India Company.<sup>45</sup> At that time, Lahore was in a state of chronic dilapidation, economic misery and overall decay. The buildings, streets, sewerage system and other facilities were in complete disrepair.<sup>46</sup> Under British patronage Lahore again prospered and became the most important city of north-western India. The *Gazetteer of Lahore District 1883-4* gives the total population of Lahore town as 149,369. The communal composition of the three major groups was as follows: 86,413 Muslims, 53,641 Hindus, and 4,627 Sikhs.<sup>47</sup>

At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century many modern government offices, public and private banks, insurance companies, warehouses and educational institutions were built in Lahore. People from other parts of Punjab and beyond were drawn towards it. The emerging new middle class and retired government preferred to settle in it. Punjab University, the engineering, medical and general colleges and a number of public and charitable hospitals and libraries rendered it a city of progressive art, culture and learning.<sup>48</sup> In that rapid economic transformation the Hindus and Sikhs enjoyed a head-start over Muslims. They had taken to modern education much earlier and were culturally better placed to function within a capitalist economy.<sup>49</sup> As Lahore expanded beyond the confines of the walled city and new localities sprang up it was the upwardly mobile Hindu and Sikh groups which settled them.<sup>50</sup>

The nationalist currents and communal revivals apace all over India invariably headed towards Lahore, where followers could be found from amongst its variegated citizenry comprising different religions, castes, communities and sects. Following the massacre at Jalianwala Bagh in Amritsar in 1919 there was a flurry of political activity in Lahore, which brought all the communities together. Hindu, Muslim and Sikh speakers addressed agitated

crowds from the pulpit of the Badshahi Mosque.<sup>51</sup> The famous December 1929 Lahore session of the Congress in which the demand for the freedom of India was first formally made drew large inter-communal crowds. The 1920s and 1930s was also a period of intensification of communal and religious revivals that had begun even earlier. The Arya Samaj, Hindu Mahasabha, the RSS and many other Hindu organizations were active in Lahore. Among Muslims the Ahrar, Khaksar and various other Islamist movements had emerged. The Muslim League was also present but until the mid-1930s its support was confined to a few intellectuals and elite politicians. The Singh Sabha and the Akali Dal echoed Sikh communal aspirations.<sup>52</sup>

#### Culture and society in Lahore from the 1920s and until 1947: written accounts and interviews

Agha Ashraf's autobiography, *Aik Dil Hazaar Dastan* (One Heart and a Thousand Stories) begins with a detailed description of his childhood in the 1920s, spent within the walled city. Children of all communities studied together in the local schools. He describes some of his Hindu and Sikh teachers at the Dayal Singh School in saintly terms.<sup>53</sup> He played truant along with his Hindu, Muslim and Sikh class-fellows. They went around, among other things, visiting Hindu temples all over Lahore on such occasions. Drinking, opium eating, gambling and other such deviations were widespread in the inner city. Ashraf himself indulged in drinking bouts along with his friends.<sup>54</sup>

In another major autobiography, *Mera Shehr Lahore* (My City of Lahore), Yunas Adeb covers mostly the period from the late 1930s onwards. As a young lad, he could casually enter orthodox Brahmin homes and go to the temple with the older, unmarried sister of his neighbour Pandit Bhagat Ram.<sup>55</sup> He notes that the people had evolved their own peculiar ways and means of circumventing the strictures of orthodox Hinduism, Islam and Sikhism and as a result a composite, heterodox way of life had emerged in the process.<sup>56</sup> In the local mohallas help and sympathy to the poor and distressed was given without reference to the various prejudices, although communal pride could sometimes prevent members of one group from taking help from the other community.<sup>57</sup> Commenting upon the multiculturalism of Lahore, he recalls that Hindus would shower flowers on the Muharram procession while Muslims flocked to the great Ram Leela festival held in the Minto Park behind the Badshahi

Mosque, and many took part in the Diwali and Dusera celebrations.<sup>58</sup> He personifies traditional multiculturalism in the following inimitable words:

I remember in particular Lala Gunpat Rai because of his typical Hindu dress and appearance. He wore narrow pajama-type trousers, a kurta (long shirt), a waist-coat, and a black pointed cap on his head. Looking at his face one new that he was extremely cordial and friendly. It was his routine that when he passed the mosque in Kucha Darzian (locality of the tailors) he would stop, bend down to touch the steps of the mosque with his hands, and then with both hands pressed together pay his respect.<sup>59</sup>

For those seeking exit from the conventions of regular society the various sufi shrines and abodes (called takkias), Hindu and Sikh non-conformist groups, training centres of wrestlers (called akharas), the quarters of the courtesans and prostitutes and various hideouts of opium-eaters and users of other intoxicants, offered a range of outlets. Among these marginal enclaves orthodox beliefs and practices were ignored.<sup>60</sup>

### Interviews

The veteran song-writer and music-director of the Bombay film industry Prem Dhawan told the present author that as a young man he came in contact with revolutionaries in the Lahore jail where his father was the superintendent. By the time he graduated from the Forman Christian College in 1942, he had been converted to Marxism. About Lahore of the 1930s and early 40s he remarked:

The atmosphere in F. C. College was cosmopolitan. The students came from all the communities. Most of us got along very well. Things were the same in most other parts of Lahore. It was indeed a city of tolerance and light. I left for Bombay in 1943. That four years later Hindus and Sikhs would have to leave Lahore forever never occurred to me. It could never have occurred, could it?

The world-famous sculptor, artist and poet Amar Nath Sehgal, with many internationally acclaimed works devoted to peace and solidarity to his credit remembered Lahore in very fond terms:

I am originally from Campbellpur. In 1939 I arrived in Lahore to study at the Government College and graduated from there in 1941. Lahore was a paragon of brotherhood. Hindus,

Muslims, Sikhs and others lived in peace and harmony. Things began to change by 1944 when the first slogans about Pakistan were chanted in Lahore. By 1946 things had changed fundamentally. Simply a suspicion that you doubted the feasibility of Pakistan could mean that some diehard Muslim Leaguer would get at your throat. In May 1947 I left Lahore because stabbing, looting and burning had become a daily routine. It was a shattering exit from a place I had learnt to love dearly. However, when I arrived in eastern Punjab things were no better. In the Kangra-Kulu Valley a wholesale slaughter of the Muslim minority took place between August and September. Out of 35,000 only 9000 managed to escape alive to Pakistan. The Beas was littered with dead bodies and a foul odour was in the air for weeks after the massacres.

### Communal conflicts before the Partition riots

Occasionally communal riots did take place in Lahore. At such times interaction between Muslims and non-Muslims became tense and volatile. One such occasion was the publication of the book *Rangeela Rasul (The Merry Messenger of God)*. Its Hindu publisher Raj Pal was sentenced on 18 January 1927 to eighteen months imprisonment and a fine of Rs 1000 for provoking enmity between Hindus and Muslims. The book was found to be a scurrilous satire on the founder of the Muslim religion. On 6 April 1929 a Muslim youth Ilam Din stabbed him to death with a knife. The Lahore High Court found him guilty and sentenced him to death on 17 July 1929, and on 31 October the same year he was hanged in the Mianwali jail and buried there. Only persistent processions and demonstrations, on the one hand, and assurances by the notables of the Muslim community, on the other, that peace and order will not be disturbed if his body were returned to his family and buried in Lahore convinced the British authorities to comply with that demand. Ilam Din received a hero's burial and was given the honorific title of Ghazi Ilam Din Shaheed by the Muslims. During those two years Hindu and Muslim relations were very hostile.<sup>61</sup>

A few years later, in 1935, the Masjid Shaheed Ganj dispute between Sikh and Muslim zealots turned into a bloody conflict. It has its origins in conflicting claims to a place claimed as sacred by both. Many people were killed and a veritable threat to law and order existed for some days.<sup>62</sup>

### High ethical standards of elite politics

Notwithstanding occasional outbursts of communal friction and confrontation, the Punjab in general and Lahore in particular maintained peace and normality until the riots of 1947. The

credit for such a state of affairs went largely to the consociational model of power sharing which the Punjab Unionist Party had established in the province since its foundation in 1923. It was the leading pro-British inter-communal party representing the powerful rural elite of Punjab. Tahir Lahori notes that whether Hindu, Muslim or Sikh, the politicians of the 1930s observed high standards of honesty. He remarks:

The finance minister was Sir Monohar Lal. His only son was an employee in a bank, but he did not hold any high position. If the finance minister had wanted he could have found him any high position. Sir Choutu Ram owned some agricultural land before he became a minister. When he left that job he still had the same piece of land. All leaders were of strong character. Muslim leaders were also of firm and exemplary patriotic character. Sir Sikandar Hayat's son was a major in the army.<sup>63</sup>

Lahori records that after March 1940, when the Muslim League passed the Lahore Resolution demanding the creation of a Muslim state, the parting of ways between Hindus and Muslims began. The former reacted with great alarm to the idea of a separate Muslim state. On the other hand the Muslim League became very popular among the Muslims of Lahore.<sup>64</sup> Seven years later, the idea of Pakistan had become a fact.

### The time to leave

Pran Nevile, who in his *Lahore: A Sentimental Journey* reminisces the city of his birth and youth in the best of spirits - lavishly praising its joyous and boisterous citizenry and telling many a tale of fun and scandal involving Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs alike - expressed the pathos and trauma of Hindus and Sikhs who left Lahore in 1947 in the following words:

It was for us a heart-rending experience to leave our beloved Lahore for good and seek refuge across the border which was created to divide the subcontinent. In the city which had been the home of our near and dear ones for centuries, there was no one left now to look back to. Suddenly, Lahore had become a foreign land.<sup>65</sup>

Som Anand also expresses the profound sense of loss which Hindus and Sikhs felt when they were forced to flee Lahore:

Communal riots became more intense after March '47 and it seemed that the Muslim leadership was out to clear the city of its non-Muslim inhabitants. That is not to say that every Muslim in Lahore liked what was happening. There were some who dreaded the prospect of the Hindus and Sikhs leaving the city for good. But such people could not speak of their feelings.<sup>66</sup>

He pays tributes especially to the editor of the Urdu literary magazine, *Adabi Dunya*, Maulana Salahuddin Ahmed and the popular Punjabi poet Ustad Daman both of whom were deeply saddened when the non-Muslims left Lahore.<sup>67</sup> He observes that although Hindus and Sikhs had begun to realise that Lahore may remain in Pakistan, it did not mean that they were willing to accept such a fate easily. Many of their leaders continued to believe that they will get Lahore on the basis of their overwhelming economic claims on that city. Others, including his father argued that come what may, non-Muslims could continue to live on in Pakistan. The communal violence however made that choice virtually impossible. He admits that Hindus and Sikhs also carried out terrorism against Muslims. An attack on the Muslims of Rajgarh, a suburb of Lahore, made the situation explosive. The RSS and other militant Hindu and organisations were behind such activities.<sup>68</sup>

### The cultural basis of communal violence

Thus far, we have been examining accounts, which suggest a robust composite, multicultural environment prevalent in Lahore, which at times was put to the test by communal clashes. For understanding, why collective insanity imploded in Lahore during 1947 and enveloped its variegated citizenry into a horrendous bloodbath, we need to bring into the picture other aspects of the situation. In this regard, we need to examine the extent to which Lahore constituted a plural society, that is, one marked by cleavages and tension, which Leo Kuper theorises can suddenly rip apart under strain. Som Anand provides some clues in this regard. He remarks that the Hindu and Muslim communities, 'lived like two streams, flowing side by side but never meeting at any point'.<sup>69</sup> He dilates further:

To keep themselves away from the Muslims' "polluting touch", the Hindus had set-up many barriers in their daily life. My mother, for example, would never allow any Muslim to enter her kitchen. No cooked food was accepted from them. I remember how, if any of our Muslim neighbours even sent any special dish for my father, it never went beyond the dining

table, a place where she did not take her own food. While eating she would never allow any of her Muslim friends or neighbours to touch her. During my childhood such inhibitions were generally not observed by male members of educated Hindu families. (Women have always been more conservative in these matters.) Some decades earlier these rules formed a strict code of conduct for all, no matter how educated or enlightened a person might be....

The absurdities of such Hindu restrictions notwithstanding, the Muslims had come to accept them as a law of nature. Their older generation knew the limits of a relationship with the Hindus and considered it improper even to offer them drinking water from their utensils.... The Hindus have always complained of Muslim fanaticism but they have never understood that the walls they raised around themselves could have not resulted in any other attitude....

It took many centuries for the Hindus of Punjab to realise how absurd and harmful their anti-Muslim prejudices were. In this respect the first current of change was felt during the Khilafat movement in the early twenties. Though the spirit of Hindu-Muslim amity received many reverses in later years, at the social level the urban elite had changed its code of conduct for the better. This was due, in part, [to] Western education. What this change meant was evident in my father's attitude. When he was young, my mother used to recall, he would come back to change his clothes if a Muslim had touched him while walking in the bazaar; but during my childhood in Model Town, father had several Muslim friends and he considered my mother's inhibitions a sign of backwardness.<sup>70</sup>

#### The economic basis of communal violence

The economic structure in Lahore surely compounded the social cleavages. Yunas Adeeb writes, 'The Hindus dominated money lending, import and export of cloth, the business in gold and silver and in food-grain.... The Muslims worked outside Lahore city in the fields. They cultivated vegetables and wheat, and most were craftsmen and artisans'.<sup>71</sup>

Pran Neville makes similar comments on the socio-economic structure:

While the majority of the city population were Muslims, very few of them were engaged in business, civil services and the professions. It was only after the Government's job reservation policy came into force that the number of Muslims in the services increased. The Muslims constituted the majority of workers and artisan, being either employed in craft industries or in factories owned by Hindus. However, they controlled the fruit and vegetable markets, milk supply, furniture shops, tent manufacture and the tailoring business. There was also a sizeable Muslim landed aristocracy which owed its wealth and status to the British government.<sup>72</sup>

The economic contradictions between Hindu-Sikh and Muslim groups had led the Communist Party of India to adopt a resolution declaring the movement for Pakistan as 'progressive'. Many prominent Muslim members of the Congress and Communist parties had subsequently joined the Muslim League. This was particularly noticeable in Lahore where

many of them were based. They started appearing in public meetings of the Muslim League, preaching from its platform the emancipation of the oppressed Muslim masses. According to their analysis, the movement for Pakistan represented the national aspirations of the Muslim people to self-determination.<sup>73</sup>

### The attitude of the Muslims of Lahore to the expulsion of Hindus and Sikhs

In Pakistan, official ideology based on the Two-Nation Theory looks upon Partition as necessary and inevitable: Hindus and Muslims were two separate nations and hence entitled to separate states. This conviction has been imbibed through the education system in the later generations of Pakistani Muslims. Further, they have been indoctrinated to believe that the Hindus and Sikhs were the culprits and Muslims the victims of the Partition massacres.<sup>74</sup> Undoubtedly the perceptions of the younger people in Lahore to those times are imbued with the crass propaganda disseminated through textbooks. As regards those who were in their late teens or more when rioting took place in Lahore, the perceptions are more varied. I have been discussing over the years with a cross-section of the people of Lahore on this theme. The dominant perception of the Muslims is that had the Hindus and Sikhs stayed behind they would have hindered and obstructed the progress and economic advancement of the Muslims. A section of Muslims was attracted to the idea of Pakistan because it was going to be an Islamic state, a utopian polity where only piety and Islamic justice were to prevail. Some veteran Communist-turned-Muslim Leaguers persist with their 'class analysis': the oppressed Muslim community overthrew the Hindu and Sikh bourgeoisie: simple and neat. The older Muslim nationalism school, with its most sophisticated exponents among the senior politicians and civil servants, emphasises the irreconcilability of the Hindu and Islamic worldviews. Among them a regret for the sufferings of people on all sides in 1947 is present, but the Congress and Hindus are held responsible for the failure of a power-sharing arrangement within a united India or a peaceful division and separation as two states.<sup>75</sup>

The less-often heard critical voices in Lahore dissent from the nationalist version. Some of them bluntly state that the attacks on Hindus and Sikhs were motivated primarily by the desire to loot and plunder and that it was the criminal element, the depressed sections of society and Muslim League activists and partisan state functionaries who, in various combinations, conducted the raids. It is interesting to note that the apologists of the attacks on

Hindus and Sikhs justify the extensive use of petrol to lit fires as the ‘poor man’s weapon’ against the better armed Hindus and Sikhs. It is pointed out that large-scale employment of arson became the chief weapon against Hindus and Sikhs only after the RSS had carried out several bomb blasts during May-June in the inner city.

On the more social and less politically theorised level, I have often heard the complaint that devout caste-conscious Hindus routinely humiliated the Muslims through their neurotic concerns for pollution by the latter. Even trivial matters such as drinking of water had to be done separately. Once in a while, however, the elderly generation does recall its Hindu and Sikh contemporaries with a tinge of nostalgia and sadness. It is not entirely uncommon that some of those non-Muslims continue to be mentioned as models of gentleness and kindness. Among them Hindu and Sikh teachers, doctors, dispensers and philanthropists figure prominently. On the whole, the upward economic mobility achieved by large numbers of Muslims in Lahore with the departure of the non-Muslims seems to be the strongest argument for believing in Partition as necessary and inevitable.

## Forced Migration and Ethnic Cleansing: The Evolution of A Process of Demographic Transformation

### The political context

The Muslim League conducted the 1945-46-election campaign in Punjab in unabashed communal terms. The creation of Pakistan was projected as the panacea for all the ills afflicting Muslim society. The Hindus and Sikhs were demonised as the main culprits and damned with appropriate slogans. On the other hand, those Muslims who opposed the Muslim League were denounced as renegades to Islam. In some cases *fatwas* were issued to the effect that Muslims who opposed the creation of Pakistan were to be denied proper Islamic burial.<sup>76</sup>

These tactics proved most effective. In the 175-member assembly the Muslim League gained an overwhelming number of seats reserved for Muslims. It won 75 seats and was the biggest single party in the Punjab Assembly. Most of its gains were made at the expense of the ruling Unionist Party, whose strength was reduced to only 18 seats. The Congress Party won 50 seats and the Sikh Akali Dal captured 22 seats. A coalition government of the Unionist Party, the Congress and the Akali Dal had been formed under the leader of the Unionist Party, Sir Khizr Hayat Khan Tiwana.<sup>77</sup>

In the third week of January 1947 the Muslim League launched its 'direct action' in Punjab against the coalition government of Khizr Tiwana. On 24 January the government issued orders banning the Muslim National Guards and the RSS. Mian Iftikharuddin refused the police entry to the premises of the Muslim League National Guard headquarters in Lahore. He, along with Shaukat Hayat, Mumtaz Daultana, Syed Amir Hussain Shah and some others publicly courted arrest. The police search unearthed some two thousand steel helmets. At any rate, 'The Muslim League had acquired its cause célèbre'.<sup>78</sup> Disturbances broke out in Lahore following the news of the arrest. These quickly spread to other towns. The government tried various tactics to halt the fast deteriorating situation but failed in its endeavour. On 2 March Tiwana resigned. The Punjab governor Sir Berurand James Glancy invited the leader of the Punjab Muslim League Nawab Iftikhar Hussain Mamdot to find a parliamentary majority, which would enable him to form a government. Mamdot opened negotiations with the Congress and Sikh members of the Punjab Assembly but failed to assuage their apprehensions 'mainly because his hands were tied by the Muslim League High Command. Jinnah discountenanced a local arrangement in the Punjab which would in any way weaken his All-India demand for Pakistan'.<sup>79</sup>

Some months earlier Master Tara Singh had emphasised the dangers Hinduism and the Congress Party posed to the Sikhs. Now, the Sikh leaders decided to side with the Congress Party and the Hindu community.<sup>80</sup> On 3 March Master Tara Singh waved his kirpan (sword) on the footsteps of the Punjab Assembly shouting 'Pakistan Murdabad , Sat Sari Akal'. Later that day he virtually gave the call for a communal war. He reportedly said:

O, Hindus and Sikhs! Your trial awaits you. Be ready for self-destruction like the Japs and the Nazis. Our mother land is calling for blood and we shall satiate the thirst of our mother with blood. We crushed Mughlistan and we shall trample Pakistan.... The world has always been ruled by minorities. The Muslims snatched the kingdom from the Hindus, and Sikhs grabbed it out of the hands of the Muslims and the Sikhs ruled over the

Muslims with their might and the Sikhs shall even now rule them. We shall rule them and shall get the government fighting. I have sounded the bugle, finish the Muslim League'.<sup>81</sup>

The next day Muslim and Hindu-Sikh rioters clashed in the city. There are conflicting reports about who attacked first. In any case, some casualties took place. In Rawalpindi similar clashes followed on the 5th. The Sikhs reportedly were the first to resort to violence. The ugly mood in the province took a deeply sinister turn when, beginning from the night of 6-7 March Muslim armed raiders descended upon several Sikh and Hindu majority villages around Rawalpindi, Jhelum and Attock. The attack continued for several days. At least two thousand non-Muslims died. Complicity of the Muslim National Guardsmen, a militia outfit closely allied to the Muslim League, and ex-servicemen was established by subsequent investigations.<sup>82</sup> The All-India National Congress Committee passed a resolution on 8 March demanding the division of Punjab into two provinces so that 'the predominantly Muslim part may be separated from the predominantly non-Muslim part'.<sup>83</sup> The resolution had been adopted in support of the Sikh leaders who wanted such a division to take place. According to Harkishen Singh Surjeet, a pro-Muslim League administration had taken over. (interview) Violence in Lahore and elsewhere in Punjab was increasing all the time. On 15 April Gandhi and Jinnah issued a joint statement on the initiative of Viceroy Louis Mountbatten denouncing the mounting violence.<sup>84</sup> It failed to make any impression. During May-June the RSS exploded a bomb in a Muslim-majority area of the inner city. In retaliation Muslims set fire to the Hindu-Sikh-majority areas of Shahalmi. Thereafter fires raged in the Hindu-Sikh majority areas.

The British government announced the Partition Plan on 3 June. Accordingly, the Punjab Assembly was to split into an eastern and a western entity on the basis of notional majority (that is numerical majority district-wise, according to the 1941 census) and vote on the question of partition of Punjab. The West Punjab Assembly voted against partition of the province by 99 votes to 27, while the East Punjab Assembly voted in favour by 50 votes to 22.<sup>85</sup> Lahore city as well as the whole district fell into the western part according to the notional division, but this was challenged by the non-Muslims.

### The legal context

The partition plan envisaged the setting up of two boundary commissions, one for Bengal and the other for Punjab. The terms of reference laid for the Punjab Boundary Commission to demarcate the international boundary between India and Pakistan stated: ‘It will be instructed to demarcate the boundaries of the two parts of the Punjab on the basis of ascertaining the contiguous majority areas of Muslims and non-Muslims. It will also be instructed to take into account other factors’.<sup>86</sup> The application of the principle of ‘contiguous majority areas of Muslims and non-Muslims’ proved quite difficult in the central parts of Punjab where communally mixed villages and towns were almost a rule. These difficulties were compounded further because the inclusion of ‘other factors’ added an ambiguity which opened the possibility of a whole range of socio-economic and cultural arguments being advanced to claim areas in these divisions.<sup>87</sup> On top of it, the 3 and 4 June statements of the Viceroy added another dimension to the terms of reference which the Commission had to bear in mind, namely, the position of the Sikh community upon whose demand the division of Punjab had been initiated in the first place, but who were nowhere in a majority in any part of Punjab and constituted only 13.2 per cent of the total population of the undivided Punjab province.<sup>88</sup> Indeed if any one place epitomised these complications it was Lahore.

The religious composition of Lahore showed the following strengths of the Muslim and non-Muslim communities:<sup>89</sup>

Year of census	Total population	Muslims	Non-Muslims
1911	228,714	129,301	99,413
1921	281,781	149,044	132,737
1931	429,747	249,315	180,432
1941	671,659	433,170	238,489

It is to be noted that between 1921 and 1931 and again in 1941 the territorial limits of Lahore municipality were extended twice. In the subsequent legal battle over Lahore fought before the Punjab Boundary Commission, the Congress and Sikh counsels argued that the extension of the limits of the city had been in the direction of Muslim-majority localities and villages on the outskirts of Lahore. Such extension had unnaturally increased the Muslim component of the population.<sup>90</sup> However, none of their various equations could establish that at any point the Hindus and Sikhs together had been in the majority.

### The Congress claim

The Congress brief on Lahore was argued by Mr M. C. Setalvad. He emphasised that non-Muslims had deep cultural roots in Lahore. They had built schools, colleges and libraries and also made outstanding economic and educational contributions to its development and prosperity.<sup>91</sup> He disputed the reliability of the 1931 and 1941 census figures which showed a clear Muslim majority in Lahore. He referred to official statements that noted that a census war had started in Punjab after 1911, which later became a complete farce as the various communities inflated their numbers to gain more seats under the system of communal representation. He pointed out that the Congress and the Sikhs had boycotted the censuses of 1921 and 1931.<sup>92</sup>

Although the 1941 census figures for Lahore district showed a 60.62 per cent Muslim and 39.38 per cent non-Muslim population strength, Muslims paid only Rs. 581,235 as land revenue while non-Muslims paid Rs. 1,263,830. Moreover, Muslims owned only 511,867 acres while non-Muslims owned 1,150,450 acres.<sup>93</sup> Thus economic aspects of the division of Punjab must also be taken into consideration. As regards the city of Lahore:

‘I will now take the city of Lahore. You will remember that so far as this city is concerned, the population ratio of Muslims and non-Muslims according to the census of 1941 is higher still; not 61 and 39 as in the district but 64 and 36. But... you will find that definitely a larger proportion of the land is in the hands of the non-Muslims.... Another factor, which is an allied factor, is in regard to urban areas and also in some districts rural areas. Here again you will find that in certain areas which are Muslim majority areas, the position is that the trade, industry, and the factories and so on and so forth are almost entirely in the hands of non-Muslims’.<sup>94</sup>

Another thing to consider would be the transport and road system. No division could be acceptable which cuts up the railway and the road transport into unworkable portions. Moreover, the facilities for repairs and maintenance of the railway line for the eastern part of Punjab required that the ‘Moghalpura Workshops (located on the outskirts of Lahore, author’s note) should be available to the Eastern part in order that the railway in that part should be able to function’.<sup>95</sup>

### The Sikh claim

Sardar Harnam Singh represented the Sikh claim to Lahore. While repeating much of the economic arguments presented by the Congress counsel, he made a passionate appeal to claim Lahore for the Sikhs on the basis of religious, cultural and historical factors. He pointed out, 'The fourth Guru Ramdas, the ancestor of all the succeeding Gurus, was born and brought up in Lahore.<sup>96</sup> The remains of the fifth Guru Arjun lay also in Lahore. Lahore was famous as the Gurus' Cradle. Therefore Lahore should go to eastern Punjab. He further asserted, 'The whole Sikh history, religious as well as political is inseparably connected with the temples in the city of Lahore and in the villages in the district'.<sup>97</sup>

#### The Muslim League claim

Sir Muhammad Zafrullah Khan presented the Muslim League's case before the Punjab Boundary Commission. He pointed out that except for the brief interlude of Ranjit Singh's rule (1799-1839) and another ten years under different Sikh warlords Lahore had consistently been under Muslim rule before the British annexation of Punjab. Not only that, it had always had a Muslim majority both in the city and in the district.<sup>98</sup> He strongly emphasised that Lahore was an equally important religious centre for Muslims. The hundreds of sufi shrines and the great Badshahi mosque were located in it.<sup>99</sup> Also, as the only university town with medical and engineering colleges, the law college and oriental college and so on and a civil aerodrome it was necessary that Lahore should go to Pakistan. It would serve the N.W.F.P., Baluchistan and Kashmir which were going to come to Pakistan because of their clear Muslim majorities.<sup>100</sup>

Also, the railway workshop at Mughalpura in Lahore was vital for the new state to have the facilities to provide necessary repair and other services. On the other hand, there were several such facilities in many other Indian cities and towns.<sup>101</sup>

#### The positions of the members of the Punjab Boundary Commission and the Radcliffe Award

Except for the chairman of the Commission, Sir Cyril Radcliffe, the other four members of the commission were nominees of the Congress, Sikhs and Muslim League. The Congress-Sikh nominees, Justice Mehr Chand Mahajan and Justice Teja Singh, recommended that Lahore

should go to India. Mahajan proposed, however, that Lahore could be jointly administered by India and Pakistan, since all communities had genuine rights and claims to it. The Muslim League nominees, Justice Din Muhammad and Justice Muhammad Munir, agreed with the Muslim League's position and recommended that Lahore should go to Pakistan. The Radcliffe Award was announced on 17 August. It awarded Lahore to Pakistan.<sup>102</sup>

The international boundary between India and Pakistan was fixed some 20 kilometres east of Lahore at Wagah. On the opposite side the Indian border started at Attari, just outside Amritsar. In between was the narrow strip of the so-called 'No Man's Land'.

### **The Lahore riots remembered**

#### Short excerpts from interviews

**Som Anand, 69. He works as a journalist in Delhi and is the author of, *Lahore: Portrait of a Lost City*.**

#### *The Congress leaders are responsible for the huge loss of life of Hindus and Sikhs in Lahore*

The Congress leadership is largely responsible for giving wrong advice and assurances to the non-Muslims that Lahore should not be abandoned. However, towards the very end they secretly agreed with the Muslim League leaders to an exchange of population. One day Nehru visited a camp of Hindu and Sikh refugees in D.A.V. College, Lahore. The angry crowd cursed him for not telling them the truth that Congress had agreed to the exchange of population. Gandhi continued to believe that once the violence subsides he will lead a congregation of non-Muslims back to Lahore and friendship and harmony will again be restored.

We lived in Model Town, an upper middle class locality, comprising mostly Hindus and Sikhs. It was a Sunday. A friend of my father, Mr B.P.L. Bedi (father of the internationally-known actor Kabir Bedi), who was a famous Communist leader in Lahore called upon us and said to my father "Lalaji I need some money". My father, who was a

banker, replied, “Bediji today is Sunday, the banks are closed.” But he insisted that since he had the keys they could go and fetch the money. My father agreed and they went away.

A relative of ours was staying with us at that time. He was about four-five years older than me. We decided to call upon an acquaintance. During our absence, some Afridi Pathans raided our house. At that time many Pathan gangs had descended from the tribal areas upon Lahore. They would go around looting and plundering non-Muslims. Some ten, twelve of them came to our house in tongas. Just at that moment, our Muslim neighbour, Maulvi Sahib, who was a supporter of the Congress Party, arrived. Our families shared the same porch at the entry. When he saw the Pathans he came over and admonished them, telling them to fear the wrath of God for their misdeeds. Instead they became angry and shouted at him for defending Hindus. In the commotion an elderly Sikh gentleman Kartar Singh, who lived right opposite our house, came towards our house to find out what the matter was. His whole family had left and he was waiting for a truck that would transport his buffalo away. When the Pathans saw him they shot him dead. They people heard them regret that they had to waste a bullet; a stab with a knife would have done the job cheaply.

My father stayed on in Lahore in spite of all the killings. He had actually married a Muslim woman. He was a managing director of a bank and the Pakistan government needed his services. When he died in 1957, I came over from India to attend the cremation ceremony. A Brahmin who continued to live in Lahore and was a government employee performed the funeral rites although he was not a practising priest.

**Jamna Das Akhtar, 83. He is a veteran journalist who started his professional career in Lahore. He lives in Delhi.**

*The riots of 1947 were the result of collective insanity of that period*

I am originally from Rawalpindi. We are known as the Hussaini Brahmins. Hussaini Brahmins were once to be found in many places in the Rawalpindi division. Our elders believed that one of our ancestor Sidhu Dutt and his seven sons died fighting on the side of Imam Hussain at Karbala.

I worked in Lahore for several newspapers including Milap, Bande Matram, Kranti and others. When the communal riots started, extremists from both sides took part in the

killing and looting of innocent people. When the situation worsened, I brought my family over to Delhi. It was in July. I was hoping to return to Lahore but could not. In Delhi I became active with an organisation, which went around recovering Muslim girls abducted by Hindu and Sikh criminals. In 1948 I could visit Pakistan again. My friend Shorish Kashmiri and others assured me that violence had subsided. I was given full cooperation and help by the authorities to trace out and recover Hindu and Sikh girls captured by the Muslims.

What happened in Lahore and in Punjab in 1947 baffles me even now. It must be some temporary insanity that caught in its grip all the communities.

**Nanak Singh Broca, 90. He was owner of the first film studio in Lahore. He now lives in Bombay.**

*The troubles in Lahore never worried me because my conscience was clean and my heart pure, but after 14 August we could not remain in Lahore*

My father was a revenue officer in the Punjab government. He served in several places, including the State of Jammu and Kashmir. In 1914 he retired and we came and settled in Lahore. I was then five years old. Our house was on Railway Road near Amritdhara. One day in 1915 he said to me: ‘You are always so inquisitive. Your brothers are going to see a movie film. If you want you can accompany them.’ We went to a cinema on Mcleod Road. Thus began my fascination for films.

I established a film distribution company by the name of Upper India Film Distribution Company and also a film studio near the Shalimar Gardens. The recordist I employed was a Muslim. The famous Muslim actor Najmul Hassan and I became partners in business. One never felt threatened or unsafe at any time. On the contrary Lahore was a very friendly city. The troubles in Lahore started after Master Tara Singh’s provoking behaviour in early March 1947. One day Najmul Hassan proposed that we make a film on an intercommunal love affair. I said to him, this might lead to riots. He replied: ‘Broca Sahab, this is the time to tell the people that we are one. We are from the same ethnic stock. Our ancestors were Hindus. So what if we have adopted the Islamic and Sikh faiths.’ Such sentiments and the very good behaviour of my Muslim neighbours dissuaded me from leaving Lahore.

My younger brother had qualified as a doctor in 1947. He was posted in a hospital near Murree hills in the Rawalpindi area. I had gone there with my wife and children to visit him. My wife was ill and needed medical attention. It was the 14<sup>th</sup> of August. A ceremony to celebrate the independence of Pakistan was going on in the hills below. A man came running to us and said: 'They want you to come down and join the celebrations.' I took part in the flag-raising ceremony. When I returned my brother had just come back from Rawalpindi. He was very worried. He said 'Good you have come back safely. Hindus and Sikhs are being attacked everywhere'. We left for India via Kashmir on 25<sup>th</sup> August. Thus terminated my stay in independent Pakistan.

### **Longer transcripts of interviews on Lahore riots**

**Introduction:** *The longer interviews given below have been grouped into four categories. The first three categories include interviews of Hindus and Sikhs who fled Lahore. The fourth category includes an interview with a Muslim who took part in the attacks on the non-Muslims.*

*Under the first category are subsumed three interviews, which provide insights into social class experiences of private individuals in the civil society. The second category comprises an interview with a government official. The third category includes views and experiences of person who were politically active and were opinion builders. Under the fourth category the views, experiences and motivations of a Muslim who took part in ethnic cleansing are given.*

*The main consideration for the different categorisations has been to capture a broad spectrum of experiences and to break the monotony of reading a long series of narrations.*

### **Social class experiences of private individuals in the civil society**

**Rattan Chand, 79.** Mr Chand learnt the art of photography from a Muslim and established himself as a photographer in Lahore in the early 1940s. He retired as the president of the Delhi Association of Photographers. He lives in Daryaganj, old Delhi.

*We were told that Lahore will remain in India but Gurdaspur will go to Pakistan*

I was born in 1920 in a village in Gurdaspur district in a family of Sahukars (moneylenders). We had considerable property. Ours was the only house that was pukka (made of bricks) in our village. My grandfather also headed the local post-office. He was the only literate person in the area and people sought his help in reading letters and in official matters. The traditional structure of Punjab was such that Muslims and Sikhs were engaged mainly in agriculture. Hindus ran shops in villages and were also dominant in urban trade and commerce. Hindus saw to it that their boys received modern education. Muslims did not take to education.

In 1937-38 Sir Choutu Ram, who was a minister in Sir Sikander Hayat's cabinet, passed a law, which abolished the system of private moneylending. Instead the government opened banks that began to offer loans to the agriculturists. This was the beginning of the Hindu-Muslim tension. This measure hit the sahuks very hard and many were ruined. Caste boundaries and communal tensions began to emerge as the traditional Muslim-Hindu economic structure collapsed. We started running a merchandise shop but then in the late 1930s I moved to Lahore and started living in the Bhati Gate area. Initially I worked in a textile factory in Shahalmi Gate. Later I learnt the art of photography. My ustad (teacher) was a Muslim.

In the early 1940s I opened a photography shop near the shrine of Data Ganj Baksh. It flourished very well. Muslims mainly owned the shops around mine. We were the best of neighbours. I had many Muslim friends. At no time did I feel insecure living and working in a predominantly Muslim area. Those were days of great harmony and joy. I later moved to Krishan Nagar. It was mainly a Hindu locality. Here I opened another photography shop that also did well. At about that time, my family began to press me to get married. They even found a girl from me. Her family lived in Ropar. I resisted. The Second World War was about to end when the Americans dropped the atomic bombs on Japan. At that time, Allied soldiers were to be found in large numbers in the northeast. I took advantage of the situation and moved to Guwahati where I opened a new photography shop. I catered only to the American soldiers. They had a lot of money. In 1946 I returned to Lahore. I felt that after the proposal of my marriage my fortunes had only multiplied. This was an omen that the girl my family wanted me to marry had brought good luck to me. Now, I agreed to get married. The guests to

the marriage party assembled in Mozang. We went to Ropar. My Ustad (the Muslim gentleman who taught me the skill of photography) was one of them. I opened another shop. This time close to the Australia Building near the Lahore Railway Station. We lived in a nearby locality on the other side of the railway line. Here Muslims were in a majority.

By the beginning of 1947 communal tensions began to rise in Lahore. Actually when the Khaksars started parading the streets of Lahore in the early 1940s the Hindus organised themselves in the RSS and would march in Hindu localities. Not until March 1947 did things get serious though. When my eldest daughter Vijay Kumari was born on 25 May, Lahore was under curfew. Some people warned me that it was unsafe to live in a Muslim area, but I did not believe that things would get so bad that our lives could be in jeopardy. As a precaution, we moved to a house next to our shop. By this time communal violence was taking place everywhere in Lahore. Hindus began to feel unsafe and many of us started moving eastwards, but the general idea prevalent in our circles was that whereas Gurdaspur will be given to Pakistan, Lahore would be awarded to India.

By July 1947 communal attacks became more frequent. In early August hell broke out all around us. Hindus and Sikhs living around the railway station were attacked by blood-thirsty mobs. Many of us took refuge in a Hindu hostel. I don't remember its name now, but proved an easy target. Some 50 of us men, women and children therefore sought refuge in the nearby Naulakha Church. However, we left our possessions in a cellar of the hostel. The priest, who was a convert from Hinduism and bore a Hindu name, gave us all the protection sharing with us the meagre food at his disposal. He contacted the authorities and used his influence to procure help. A military truck manned by Gurkha troops arrived which took us to a safe place in the Lahore cantonment.

During this period a Sikh woman, whose husband had been killed some days earlier and who had lost her child, became very friendly with my wife and me. She always carried my baby daughter in her lap. We both felt very sorry for her. She pleaded with me to go back to the cellar in the hostel and fetch her belongings. I also wanted to bring over our own trunk. On 15 August I came back to the hostel, but everything had been looted. Worst still, suddenly I found myself surrounded by a crowd. They wanted to kill me. The local butchers were among them. They were waving their knives in the air. I ran for my life. They followed me. I felt that death was imminent. Suddenly I found myself in front of a police station. I jumped

over its low wall. In the compound a British police officer was sitting on a chair. Around him stood some of his staff. All were Muslims.

I threw myself at the feet of the Britisher and implored him to save my life. He remained unmoved and did nothing. I now pleaded with the other police officials to save my life. They scolded me, calling me bad names and hit me with their rifle butts. They said that nobody would kill me and therefore I need not make such a fuss. Outside the wall of the police station stood the crowd. I sensed that a violent and painful death would be my lot any moment, and made one more effort to escape. I ran out of the police station in a direction, which seemed unguarded. The crowd followed in hot pursuit. I felt that my end had come. There is nothing that can be compared to the fear of death. I was now running in the middle of the road. Suddenly a fire brigade truck with Sikh staff appeared from somewhere. I cast myself on the ground in front of it. The crowd quickly dispersed when they saw the Sikhs in uniform. The Sikhs took me safely back to the cantonment where I was reunited with my family.

We crossed over to India on 16 August. We had to go through many hardships. We had lost everything. There was nowhere to turn to. Eventually I arrived in Delhi. Here I began to work in a photography shop owned by a Muslim. Mr Ahmed Hassan, the owner, decided to emigrate to Pakistan in 1948. I have once again prospered through the dint of hard work. I became the President of the Delhi Photographers Association. Some years ago I retired.

I still recall my Lahore days. All the communities lived in peace and concord. I still have Muslim friends in Lahore and Karachi. Some of them have visited me. They have invited me to the weddings of their children, but the fear acquired when the mob was out to kill me has traumatised me forever. I would like to go back and see Lahore, but probably will never dare do so.

**Pran Nevile, 75. He began his career as journalist, then joined the Indian Foreign Service and later worked for the UNCTAD. He is author of, *Lahore: A Sentimental Journey*. He lives in Delhi.**

*The communal tension in Punjab and Lahore was fomented by Muslims from UP and Bihar*

I was born in Mohalla Molayan, Sutar Mandi inside Lohari Gate. It was a mixed area. We lived in a Hindu mohalla. Next to us was a Muslim mohalla. There was a woman, Mehtab Bibi, who used to sew ladies' clothes. My mother and my sisters had their clothes sewn by her. At that time, Hindus and Muslims did not eat together, but my father had many Muslim friends and the men would meet together to discuss, drink and make merry. The womenfolk followed the orthodox codes and restrictions more strictly. During marriage and other ceremonies the Muslims would send fruit to our homes but not cooked food or sweets. On the other hand, Muslims would eat at our place. These rules were accepted as given and normally did not result in resentment or tension.

On the other hand, Muslim fruit-sellers, milkmen, vegetable sellers and so on supplied most of the daily needs in the Hindu localities. When Muslim women entered a Hindu locality they would lift the veil as a matter of course. Everyone knew how to conduct himself/herself in such situations. The inner city of Lahore was indeed a paragon of communal amity and understanding. Later we moved to Nisbet Road. I studied in the D.A.V. School and then at the famous Government College. Government College was truly a centre of cultural freedom and free mixing among the communities. Its intellectual spirit was cosmopolitan. Hindus were in a majority, but the number of Muslims had gradually been increasing. Muslims were the landed gentry of Punjab and for a long time they were not keen on education. The Hindus took to education much earlier. Later the British began to reserve seats for Muslims. This began in the 1920s and gradually more Muslims were admitted to the medical and engineering colleges and they entered the services.

After the Pakistan Resolution of March 1940, Muslim students from UP began to come to Punjab. They started to poison the atmosphere in Lahore, but until 1946 things remained calm. The UP Muslims felt that if a Muslim homeland was created they will be the ruling class. They did not think that Punjabi Muslims would be any match for them. The Calcutta Killings and the riots in Bihar added fuel to the fire.

Among the Hindus and Sikhs there was a fear that Lahore could go to Pakistan because in the district as a whole Muslims were in a majority. In the city proper, Hindus and Sikhs were in a majority. There were only two buildings on the Mall, which belonged to the Muslims; Shah Din Building and Ghulam Rasool Building. The latter was in fact under mortgage to some Hindu. Hindus and Sikhs owned the rest. In Anarkali also it was mainly Hindus and Sikhs who owned the shops and businesses.

I had joined service in Delhi in 1946, but my parents were in Lahore when the riots started. One day in June, my father was coming back on a tonga (horse-driven carriage) from a visit to Mughalpura. A Muslim mob recognised that he was a Hindu from the way he wore his turban. They were about to attack him when one of them, to whom my father had once done some favour, stopped the others. In fact he accompanied him all the way to Beadon Road, where it was safe. Although my immediate family members could leave Lahore safely, many of my schoolteachers and professors were killed.

My father was in the postal department. He actually opted for Pakistan. When things became really bad his Muslim friends persuaded him to leave Lahore for the time being and return when law and order had been restored. On 14 August he boarded the train for Amritsar. His friends accompanied him to the railway station and found him and my mother seats in a compartment where many Europeans were sitting. They arrived in Amritsar safely, but for some three weeks we did not know anything about their whereabouts. My father could never recover from the shock of leaving Lahore. He was posted in Ambala Cantonment, where he died in 1954 a heart-broken man at the age of 58.

Jinnah was not basically communal. None of the leaders expected riots of such a magnitude to take place.

**Dr Jagdish Chander Sarin, 79. Interviewed on 24 October at his residence in Delhi. Dr Sarin was educated at the King Edward Medical College, Lahore and started his career in a Lahore hospital. He resigned as Reader in Pathology from Medical College, Jaipur in 1960. He lives in Delhi.**

*Our Lahore leaders were convinced that Lahore will remain in India; the origins of the Punjab tragedy are to be found in the inflammatory propaganda of UP and Bihar Muslims in the Rawalpindi area*

I was born in Hoshiarpur, but we shifted to Lahore in 1933 when I was in the fifth class. I was educated in the D.A.V. School and later College and then at the King Edward Medical College from where I graduated in 1944. I became a house surgeon in Sir Ganga Ram Hospital. After one year I became a demonstrator in pathology in the Balk Ram Medical College, which is now known as the Fatima Jinnah Medical College. Bilqis Fatima who

became the first principal of that college was one year senior to me. I have some friends from those times who have kept the contact. One of my class fellows Zia ur Rahman visits me sometimes from Islamabad. He has relatives in India. Mohammad Hussain Bokhari, who was an adviser to the health ministry in the government of Pakistan, once came to India and we met.

We lived in Mozang, near the tonga-stand close to the high court. Our landlord was a Muslim. We used to go to his place and eat there and he would visit us and eat with us. The women in his family never observed purdah from us children. The Khaksars used to come to our locality and do their military parade. They never bothered us. But many Muslims and Hindus were afraid of them because of their militant style and behaviour. In my college days I had many Muslim friends. After living in Mozang for some time, we moved to Gowalmandi in an area called Ganda Engine. From there we shifted to Chamberlain Road. Later we moved to Montgomery Park, which was behind Nishat Cinema.

Not until the last days before I moved to eastern Punjab did it ever occur to me that we will have to leave Lahore. First came Master Tara Singh's outburst. Then a few days later followed the attack on Sikhs and Hindus in the villages around Rawalpindi and Jhelum. I volunteered along with two other doctors to go to the camps where the victims had been brought. I stayed a complete month. At least ten thousand people were staying in the camp where I was located. I saw many maimed people. In some cases the mutilation had been carried out with exceptional barbarity. Even I, a doctor, was shocked. The assailants had chopped off the breasts of women and raped them many times. The men had also been subjected to bestial acts of disfiguring. Some children, even babies, had been pierced with sharp spear-like things after their bodies had been flung in the air. When I talked to some of the survivors they said that the Muslim hordes had been indoctrinated by people who had come from UP and Bihar. The demobilised Muslim servicemen who had returned after serving at various fronts in the Second World War seemed to have planned the whole operation. After that tension rose gradually in the whole of Punjab.

On 21 June fire was set to the Hindu area of Papar Mandi in Lahore. After that Machi Hata and then Shahalmi were put on fire. There was a magistrate Cheema who personally directed the attacks on the non-Muslims. He would not allow the fire-brigade people to do their duty and if Hindus and Sikhs tried to flee from the place they were sent back. During those days when I used to go to work from my house, taking the route from Montgomery Park

to the Plaza Cinema and then to the Medical College, one heard daily that someone had been killed or seriously injured. Some seven to eight people were being put to death daily. If one day, seven Hindus were killed then next day seven or eight Muslims were reported dead. In our own area, to the best of my knowledge, the local Muslims did not attack us. One day two badly burnt persons arrived in the hospital. They were most likely RSS cadres who had been trying to make a bomb. It had exploded and caused them severe injuries.

One day in June a friend of mine came and told me that the Hindu locality of Mohalla Sareen in the walled city had been attacked the previous night and seventeen young men had been killed. They had no weapon to defend themselves. A doctor was needed to help the wounded. I offered to go and help those people. I went to the head-office of the Sarswati Insurance Company owned by the leading Hindu Mahasabha leader, Sir Gokal Chand Narang. It was also the headquarters of the Lahore Relief Society, which was actually a cover name for the Hindu militants. There we got the basic equipment for first-aid and also a 303 rifle and some cartridges. I had never used any weapon before and got very scared of the idea of carrying it. A Maharashtra who had played a part in the socialist movement in the 1940s gave me bottles of ammonia and bromine capsules. He told me that if you are attacked and want to disperse the crowd you should throw them on the ground. Fumes will come up and the crowd will disperse. We concealed the rifle in a stretcher and other such things in bundles of cotton and drove to the Mohalla Sareen in Sir Gokal's big Buick car. He was the leading Hindu leader of Lahore. We entered Shahalmi Gate, then Rang Mahal. Many people were assembled there. They were shouting, 'Don't go further. A fire is raging ahead.' We kept going, however, and entered Kashmiri Bazar. We parked the car in front of Mohalla Sareen. We went in, stayed for some time, gave them the things we had taken with us and then left via Shahi Mohalla. What we learnt was that Muslim boys had been trying to enter the mohalla through a narrow gate with the intention of setting that locality on fire while the Hindu boys inside had been trying to stop them with the help of sticks and stones. Both sides seemed not to possess any other weapons. The next day seven members of the Lahore Relief Society, which were actually the RSS, went there to give them bullets. They were arrested by the police and later tortured.

Afterwards the great fires in the walled city began and whole Hindu areas were burnt down. This continued unabated, but it was still by no means certain that Lahore will go to Pakistan. One day I said to Dr Gopi Chand Bhargava, who was a Congress leader, 'Dr Sahib

you should leave Lahore. There is a danger to your life here'. He replied ' No I am a follower of Gandhi. If someone comes and kills me I shall die quietly.' Another person, Mohan Lal, said jokingly 'Dr Sahib everybody is selling his property. Have you any to sell. I will buy it.' Actually the Hindu leaders of Lahore were very confident that Lahore would remain a part of India. Dr Gopi Chand Bhargava was convinced that Lahore would never go to Pakistan. The population of Lahore was more or less evenly balanced between Muslims and non-Muslims. Perhaps the Muslims were in a slight majority. I left Lahore on the 9<sup>th</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup> of July for Jullandhar because some friends had warned us that our house would be attacked. They told me to come back when normality was restored. The rest of my family members had gone already. It was many weeks later that we could trace out each other. I actually started my return journey for Lahore on 11 August because on the 12<sup>th</sup>, I had to report at work. However, on the way I met fleeing Hindus and Sikhs in the thousands. It became clear to me that returning to Lahore was out of the question. I therefore gave up.

An uncle and a cousin of mine were stabbed and taken to Mayo Hospital. They mentioned my name to a colleague of mine, Dr Muhammad Nazir, who was on duty. He looked after them as if they were his own uncle and cousin.

**Ram Parkash Kapur, 75. Interviewed on 20 October 1999 at his residence in Delhi. Mr Kapur comes from an affluent upper class family of publishers and entrepreneurs of Lahore. He is a publisher and an industrialist and lives in Delhi.**

*Partition took place because the Muslims wanted to create an Islamic state*

I was born in 1924 in a very well known family of textbook publishers of Lahore. The name of our firm was Attar Chand Kapur and Sons. My great grandfather founded it. After my grandfather died in 1925 my father, Lala Ram Jawaya Kapur, and his brothers took over the business. We had a very big printing press behind Nishat Cinema, which we also owned. The press was built in 1927 and the cinema in 1928. My father worked indefatigably day and night and he brought the firm on the same level and standard as British publishers. He was a great friend of the governor of Punjab. In 1927 he was nominated as municipal commissioner of Lahore. He was so close to the British that the governor would call him and seek advice on which Hindu to nominate as a minister. At that time, elections had not been introduced.

My father had very good relations with Muslim leaders. Sir Sikandar Hayat, Sir Abdul Qadir, Sir Shahabuddin, Mumtaz Daultana and so many others used to often visit our house. Feroz Khan Noon, Nawab Mamdot and Shaukat Hayat, were very close friends of his. Not only at the elite level but also on the popular level there was no tension between Hindus and Muslims.

In the morning of 14th August 1947, Shaukat Hayat and Nawab Mamdot came to my father. Shaukat was a minister and Mamdot chief minister of the new Muslim League government in Punjab. They told my father not to leave Lahore. He was to stay in Pakistan and continue his business and maintain business relations with India. They were to provide him full protection. When my father heard that the leaders of the new Pakistan would give him complete protection he decided not to leave. We had a house on 10 Edgerton Road. It was built on two and half acres of land. We had a very successful and established business in Lahore. So, he saw no reason to leave and go to India.

But after the 16<sup>th</sup> of August communal frenzy flared up in Lahore, especially in the inner city. In our own area, nothing untoward happened until then. My father was an honorary magistrate. The British deputy commissioner Mr William asked me to inspect the situation in the trouble spots, so he left on such a round. At that time there was a city magistrate, Mr Cheema. He said to my father: 'What business do you have to come here? Now that Pakistan has been created, I am in charge.' My father replied: 'No, I have been instructed by the deputy commissioner to come and look at the situation. If he says, then I will not come again.' Now, this man Cheema was rabidly anti-Hindu. He somehow managed to dissuade Mr William and next day my father received a phone-call from the deputy commissioner to the effect that he should not go on any such round any more, because his life was in danger. My father rang up Mamdot and explained the whole situation. He replied that there was nothing to worry. There was no danger to his life.

In the meantime, riots in eastern Punjab broke out on a big scale. Actually in western Punjab riots had begun already after 3 March. My feeling is that the people had been incited to believe that an Islamic state was going to be created in Pakistan, and therefore non-Muslims had to be expelled from such a state. Otherwise a proper Islamic state could not be established. When the Muslim leaders gave the call 'Islam is in danger' the people got carried away. In any case, we stayed on some more days in Lahore.

On 5 September Mamdot and Shaukat Hayat again visited my father. They expressed great regret that things had gone out of control and they could not protect us anymore. My father said: 'How can I leave now. Until the 14<sup>th</sup> of August I could get help from others who were leaving. Now, I have no truck or anything else to carry my belongings.' They said: 'Your business assets will have to remain in Pakistan. However, your personal belongings and household articles can go along with you. We will arrange the transport for you and also proper police protection so that you can cross the border into India safely.'

They gave three trucks to us. We knew somebody in the army. He promised to lend us another one or two trucks. Our family and my uncles' families left our Egerton Road House on 7 September. When we were driving through Baghbanpura on our way towards the border, a police inspector stopped us. He said: 'You cannot carry so many things with you. All this is now the property of Pakistan. Leave everything here'. However, Mamdot had ordered a police superintendent to help us cross the border safely and with our belongings. He asked the police inspector: 'Why have you stopped these people. The chief minister has ordered that they can go to India with their belongings.' The inspector retorted: 'Who are you? All these things belong to the people of Pakistan.' The SP tried to explain to the inspector that he was implementing the decision of the chief minister and if he obstructed him, he had the authority to suspend him. The inspector remained defiant. Finally, the SP ordered him to take off his belt and badge and hand it over to him. The SP now came to our car and said: 'When you cross over from Pakistan to India, please unload the government trucks and send them back.' My father did exactly that. Once we reached Amritsar the trucks drove back to Pakistan. The responsibility for the partition riots was that of Jinnah. He wanted Pakistan at all costs. Our Congress leaders were such fools they played into his hands.

Nobody in our family saw the violence with their own eyes because we never went to the old city or other trouble spots. Ours was an upper class area. In Lohari and Shahalmi gates, Anarkali, Ichra, Chauburji, and even Kila Gujjar Singh, which was very close to our house, riots did take place. In our factory most of the workforce was Muslim. All the machine-men and bookbinders were Muslims. They were completely devoted to him. None of them created any disturbance or trouble for us.

We left our property in the charge of the son of Sheikh Nur Elahi, inspector of schools Lahore division. He and my father were like brothers. We had a paint factory, called the Crescent Paint and Varnish Factory, on the canal-bank. My father entrusted that factory to

him and said: 'Please keep it under your control. If we return, then we can get it back. If we don't, then, it does not matter whether you keep it or someone else takes it.'

The press and other properties remained with my youngest uncle who stayed behind with a friend of his Mir Hussain Sani who lived on Temple Road. My uncle had severe diabetes. His family had cross over to India, but he was hoping to retain our property in Lahore because everything was jointly owned by my father and his brothers. Two years later he crossed over to India, but the day he arrived in Amritsar he died. My father came over to Delhi from Amritsar. He was bitterer with the Congress leaders for accepting the division of India then with Jinnah and the Lahore Muslim leaders.

I tell you what happened during those days. Nehru was in Lahore just before the 14<sup>th</sup> of August. He met with a number of Hindu notables at the residence of Bhim Sen Sacchar. In the meeting he was told by all those who were present that circumstances were such that no Hindu will be able to stay on in Pakistan. Panditji replied that Hindus had lived under the Mughals in the past; they could do it now under the Muslim rulers of Pakistan. My father said: 'Panditji at that time, Hindus lived in an undivided India and the Mughals ruled in an undivided India. They could not have thrown out all Hindus from such a state. Now the situation is completely different. You are completely cutting off a part of India and giving it to Pakistan. Here, they want to establish an Islamic state and not simply a Muslim kingdom. In such a state Hindus will never be safe and they will not be wanted. You should not have agreed to the division of India.' Panditji showed visible signs of irritation and replied: 'You people don't understand anything. You do not want the British to leave.'

The problem with Nehru was that he never wanted to go into the details. Moreover, he wanted to become the prime minister. He therefore accepted the idea of Pakistan and made Gandhi also concede such a demand. I sometimes think that although Mamdot and Shaukat were good friends of my father, the riots in Lahore would not have taken place had they really opposed them. At some point they must have connived at the attacks on Hindus. They wanted to rule in Pakistan unchallenged by others.

### **Government Official**

**Yuvraj Krishan, 79. Interviewed on 21 October at the India International Centre. Retired as Deputy Comptroller and Auditor General of India. He is an author of many**

**works. His most recent publications include ‘The Doctrine of Karma’, 1997 and *Ganesa: Unravelling of an Enigma*, 1999. He lives in Delhi.**

*Forced Migration was the result of the communalisation of the administrative services, especially the law and order branches and security forces*

I was born in Lahore in 1922. We lived in Dhobi Mandi in the old Anarkali area. The locality where we lived had a Hindu majority, but next to us was a Muslim majority area. I did my M.A. in history in 1943 and sat in the central services exam in 1944. I was selected and joined the Railway Accounts Service in 1944 as an accounts officer at the Railway Headquarters in Lahore.

Although differences did exist between the communities and from time to time one heard of some communal tension, most of the time things were peaceful. I had several Muslim friends. Trouble in Lahore started with Master Tara Singh’s speech on 3 March at Kuri (Girls’) Bagh near Purani Anarkali, nearby our house. Before the real massacres and burnings started in May, communal animosity began to be expressed in terms of belligerent communal slogans at night from the rooftops. The Muslims would shout ‘Nahra-e-Takbir, Allah o Akbar’. This was followed by screams of ‘Har, Har Mahdev’ by the Hindus and ‘Jo Bole So Nihal, Sat Sri Akal’ by the Sikhs. Each chorus dragged on only to be followed by the other side prolonging its menacing recitation of the religious call to arms. All this generated deep fear and insecurity. When the attacks started on a more organised basis, Hindus and Sikhs were attacked in those areas where they were in a minority and Hindu-Sikh gangs attacked Muslims where the latter were in a minority.

The police in Lahore was overwhelmingly Muslim. It played a very partisan role during that period. We lost confidence in the state machinery. If a Hindu or Sikh went to the police station to ask for help it was denied in practice if not formally. By early August many Hindus and Sikhs had left for the eastern part, perhaps not with the intention of going away forever. It must be pointed out that the political leaders of all parties, including Jinnah, had assured the minorities that they need not leave, but since the division of the country also envisaged that the services will be divided, the administration had been split notionally and no longer owed allegiance to a unified state. Thus the officials and functionaries began openly to

favour their own co-religionists. The Hindus and Sikhs in Lahore felt that they had no protection against the criminal elements of the Muslim community.

In 1949 I published an article in which I presented a thesis explaining the riots and forced migration. It is the following. One should distinguish between communal riots and forced migration as two interconnected but separate phenomena. As long as the services were composite and each functionary followed the rules, law and order could be maintained in an impartial manner. The trouble started when the option was given to the functionaries of the central government and of the provincial governments of Punjab and Bengal to choose between joining either India or Pakistan. It made those functionaries biased and partisan. Forced migration became inevitable when the law and order machinery, instead of simply ignoring appeals for help, became actively involved in systematic attacks to drive people of the other communities out. I think that administrative and police functionaries bear the greatest responsibility for the communal killings.

My father had left for Kulu when the troubles started. My elder brother, a cousin of mine, and I lived together in our Dhobi Mandi house. On the night of 27 May the Muslims set fire to Papar Mandi, a Hindu locality in the walled city. When the Hindus tried to come out the police ordered them back since there was curfew at that time. At two o'clock in the night we could see from the roof of our house flames leaping from the direction of the old city. All this deeply discouraged and frightened us.

By 1947 further recruitment to the ICS had been stopped. On the eve of independence the government of India decided to establish an all India administrative service. In July the first exams to it were held and I decided to compete for it. My examination centre was located in Islamia College Railway Road, but I was too frightened to go there because of the communal killings. My brother was a journalist at the Civil and Military Gazette. He wrote to Sardar Patel, requesting him to change my exam centre. Surprisingly Sardar Patel took notice of his letter and it was shifted to Government College, which was safe.

I had decided to opt for India as I had the forebodings that non-Muslims will not be safe in Pakistan. One day in July a senior colleague of mine, Mr Mushtaq Ahmed, who belonged to a famous Muslim family of Allahbad and who eventually the Auditor General of Pakistan, met me in the corridors of the Railway Headquarters. He tried to persuade me to opt for Pakistan but I told him that I don't want to be butchered. Mr Ahmed did not mind what I said. Rather he talked to my chief, a South Indian Christian Mr C.T. Venngopal, urging him

to convince me to change my mind and continue in Pakistan. He even promised to have me promoted but I felt that Hindus would be in grave danger in Pakistan.

Since I had opted for India, I was required to leave for Jullandhar and take charge of the office there on 14 August. The Radcliffe Award had not been announced yet, but the notional boundary had become the effective line of demarcation between western and eastern Punjab. It was felt that Lahore will go to Pakistan but the exact boundary line was a subject of confusion. However, most of us knew which areas were Muslim majority areas and which were Hindu-Sikh majority areas. Jullandhar we knew will come to India. Also, Amritsar was going to go to India. The non-Muslim leaders, especially the Sikhs, however, were hoping to win Lahore on the basis of “other factors”.

On 13 August I reached Lahore railway station at 6 pm, just before the curfew commenced, to catch the train to Jullandhar. At that time the curfew began at 6 in the evening. Our train was to leave at 8.30 pm. My boss, the south Indian Christian, accompanied me. He was entitled to travel in a separate saloon and wanted me to accompany him. The train however got delayed. An hour later, at 9.30 the saloon carriage arrived, although the train, which was to take us, had not arrived yet. My chaprasi (orderly), a Hindu who was an ex-army man was also with us. He told me that we should not sit in the saloon because it was dangerous to be alone. The fellows who had brought the saloon carriage pulled it back into the yard when they realised that we did not intend to occupy it. I think this saved us. Murders at the railway station before 14 August did not take place on the main platforms, but in the various yards and sidings where the railway carriages were stabled.

I remember that while we were waiting a trainload of Muslim refugees arrived from Amritsar. Most of them were women. Many were carrying children in their arms. My guess is that the men had been killed but the womenfolk spared. It is fifty-two years now and my memory perhaps betrays me but what I remember distinctly from that evening of 13 August are the horror-struck faces of those women. I realised that more retaliatory violence will now follow in Lahore as the reports of the various riots and attacks reach different parts of western Punjab.

A train finally left late in the night. I arrived in Jullandhar city early in the morning of the 14<sup>th</sup>. There I saw the brutal killings of Muslims. Three Sikhs cut down an old man carrying all his belongings on his head. Some Muslims belonging to nearby villages tried to enter the Jullandhar cantt. station by force. Three Indian soldiers shot them down. One more

terrible memory haunts me to this day. After a brief stay in Jullandar I came to Delhi, where I was staying at the Railway officers retiring room on top of the old Delhi railway station. I remember an old Muslim with a flowing white beard and a young man with a black beard were waiting on the station, probably with the intention of migrating to Pakistan. Both were attacked. The old man began to bleed profusely from the stabs he had received. There was a police station on the railway premises itself. Instead of helping him the police let him bleed. After some time a military truck came. Dead bodies were heaped on it. They put both the old man and the young Muslim on it even though they were still alive. What happened to them, one can only guess.

My brother and cousin came safely from Lahore by a refugee train late in August. There are always pleasant exceptions to main trends and propensities, however. For example, a relative of mine had retired from the railways as a junior officer in August only a few days before the actual division took place. He could not, therefore, collect his provident fund nor get his dues, because he had fled from Lahore. I wrote to the Muslim accounts officer, who had worked as a superintendent under me. He went out of the way to help, and the government of Pakistan paid the provident fund to him, even though the official policy was not to release the provident fund and other dues to non-Muslims employees.

### **Political-Media Experiences**

**Dr Ramanand Sagar, 82. Interviewed on 25 October at the India International Centre, New Delhi. He began his career as a journalist and later became the editor of the pro-Congress Urdu/Hindi newspaper, *Milap*, published from Lahore. He is one of the leading filmmaker and storywriter in Bombay. His television serial, *Ramayana*, followed by serials on similar Hindu religious and cultural themes have been a great success. He lives in Bombay.**

*The British wanted to bleed us for our freedom; our leaders told us to stay put*

I was born on 29 December 1917 in *Asal-Guru-Ke*, a small village on the outskirts of Lahore. My father had business interests in Kashmir, but I grew up with my grandparents who lived in

*Cha Pichwara* off Lytton Road, Mozang, Lahore. My childhood was spent in Mozang. In those times, children from all communities played together and the elders were respectful to each other's beliefs and traditions. As a youngster, I would sometimes go to the mosque along with my Muslim friends and join them in their prayers. I can't recall any tension between the different families in our locality.

Later we moved to a house on Nisbet Road. I studied in the D.A.V. High School, Lahore, Shri Pratap College, Srinagar and Punjab University and began my career as a journalist in 1938. Our policy was to promote communal amity and humanistic values and to advance the nationalist cause. In those days, the nationalist movement was in full swing. After the Muslim League gave the call for a separate Muslim state in its Lahore secession of March 1940, some communal tension could be sensed in the otherwise very harmonious atmosphere of Lahore, but at that time nobody could imagine that Hindus will have to abandon Lahore.

Despite the changing political situation of Lahore, the artistic and literary activities of that city continued to flourish. The latter benign influence could be noticed in the budding film industry there. I had started writing scripts for films. In 1944, W. Z. Ahmed invited me to Poona to participate in a team of writers, which was to produce quality films. I stayed there for two years, but in 1946 when communal tension began to worsen in Lahore, I had to return for the sake of my family. At that time my son Prem had just been born (29<sup>th</sup> March 1946). In early March 1947 communal riots broke out in Lahore when Hindu-Sikh students clashed with their Muslim counterparts. Suddenly nobody felt secure. We Hindus, however, were convinced that Lahore will remain a part of India. There was so much material and cultural contribution of the Hindus and Sikhs to the development of Lahore that it never occurred to us that one day it will be taken away from us. The all-India as well as the Lahore-level Congress leadership told us not to vacate Lahore. It was widely believed that Lahore would be given to India. However, violent attacks against Hindus and Sikhs became a daily occurrence. Many Hindus and Sikhs who had relatives in eastern Punjab or elsewhere in India began to move their families to safety.

We had to flee Lahore in July when things went from bad to worse. We did not cross into India from Wagah, but took another route. We travelled to Sialkot and from there to Jammu and continued to Srinagar. At that time I was writing my novel '*Aur Insan Mar Gaya*' (And Humanity Died), based on the horrors of Partition as my personal experience of those days. When I left, this novel was half complete. The Great Urdu Poet Faiz Ahmed Faiz knew

about my incomplete novel. Hence later on he came to Gulmarg in Kashmir, where I was staying in a hut in Tangmarg. He came to tell me about the events which followed in Lahore after I left.

We managed to board the plane from Srinagar to Delhi. I worked for a while in Delhi but then came to Bombay. I have been in that city for some 52 years now. I have achieved outstanding successes in the film industry, but I still feel like a refugee. The feeling of being a refugee never lets go of you. It is a constant part of ones existence. The first thirty years of my life in Lahore are the ones that I will always cherish. It is where most of my fond memories of younger days are rooted.

Lahore is always in my heart, but I don't think I would ever visit it. I am told that it has changed considerably. I want to preserve the memory of the pre-Partition Lahore. It was indeed a city of love and harmony. Now, when I look back upon those events, which led to Partition, I am even more convinced than ever before that the real masterminds behind the division of India were the British. In some deeply evil way they wanted to punish us for demanding freedom. What could be more satisfying than to bleed those who had challenged their supremacy? I have written down my version of Partition in my novel, *Aur Insaan Mar Gaya (And Humanity Died)*.

**Harkishen Singh Surjeet, 81. Secretary-General of the Communist Party of India (Marxist). Interviewed at the CPI (M) head-office in New Delhi on 21 October. He lives in Delhi.**

*The economic structure of Punjab provided the root cause for communal tension.*

I am originally from Jullandhar, but in August 1947 I was in Lahore. When the demand for Pakistan was first raised, the Punjab was under the rule of the Unionist Party. It maintained excellent communal harmony. Lahore always played a prominent role in left politics and many Muslims were active in the movement. Fazal Elahi Qurban, Ferozuddin Mansur, Abdul Waris, Mazhar Ali Khan, Daniyal Latifi, Mian Iftikharuddin, and even Mumtaz Daultana were either members of the Party or sympathisers. Many Muslims from upper middle-class families of Lahore who had studied in England had been converted to Marxist ideas during their stay abroad. Among them, Mian Iftikharuddin who hailed from a very rich landowning

family, provided most of the financial help to the Party. When the Party became legal and open in 1941, we set up our office at 114 Mecleod Road. The telephone number was 2964. After my release from jail I stayed in Lahore until 12 August 1947. Many times in recent years I have wanted to visit Lahore but the threat from the extremist Khalistani Sikhs (who have had bases in Lahore since the 1980s) has deterred me from doing so.

In the 1940s the Congress Party in Punjab was the stronghold of the urban Hindu trading class. It had little influence in the countryside. In 1936 when Sir Choutu Ram introduced a bill to remit the debts to the moneylenders the Punjab Congress refused to support such a bill. Mahmud Ali (Mazhar Ali Khan's elder brother) and I came to Delhi and met Maulana Azad, who instructed the Congress members of the Punjab legislature to support that bill. Of the 13 Congress members of the legislature 7 were Communists. They voted in favour of the bill but the 6 who were not abstained. The bill was passed without the support of the main Congress leaders. Of course remission from the loans was granted, but still the cultivator always needed to borrow money and the moneylenders continued to do business in informal ways.

When the negotiations began with the Cabinet Mission, the press tended to sensationalise its reporting of the events. Consequently confusion and anxiety increased and communal propaganda heightened. In March 1947, when the government of Khizr Hayat fell, certain pro-Muslim League changes in the administration took place. Within six or seven months it became massively popular. It employed communal propaganda effectively. By the end of 1946 it had become clear that Pakistan will be created but thus far it did not mean that minorities would have to move. In Rawalpindi city there was a large Sikh trader cum moneylender community. Suddenly the debt burden under which the Muslims had been suffering converted into communal wrath and fury. The Muslim League started its anti-minorities rioting and a massive assault on Sikh and Hindu villages took place around Rawalpindi. That is when hell really broke out in Punjab.

When I recall the earlier period of my stay in different parts of western Punjab, I can't remember any trace of animosity between the three communities. However, things quickly changed in a fundamental manner. The way people looked at each other was so different. Nobody was safe. I did not want to leave Lahore, but my friends advised me to go for the time being. Teja Singh Swatantar came a few days after partition. Sohan Singh Josh had left even earlier than me. I left on 12 August and came to my native Jullandhar.

To us who were politically aware, it was clear that Lahore would be given to Pakistan because after Amritsar and from Wagah onwards Muslims were in a majority and Lahore had a clear Muslim majority. The day the two states became independent tension increased enormously and large-scale systematic killings followed. The communal attacks on minorities were definitely planned. I know more about the persons involved in the eastern wing because I saw those dreadful acts with my own eyes. In that conspiracy, the Maharaja of Patiala was involved. The idea was that if the Muslims were driven out the Sikhs could form their own state in eastern Punjab. Congress activists and Akalis in the eastern wing, all became communalists. Only the Muslim Nawab of Malerkotla succeeded in negotiating a peace deal with the Sikh leaders. It allowed the Muslims of that state to stay on.

The communists alone formed defence squads in both western and eastern Punjab. Many Muslim Communists died defending the Hindus and Sikhs in western Punjab. The full fury upon Muslims in east Punjab was unleashed ten days after the official Partition. Had peaceful migration taken place, it would have not created the bitterness that followed the riots. In my opinion since the agreement to exchange populations was reached only after the riots had begun it accelerated rather than dampened the communal killings.

### **Muslim activist involved in attacks on Sikhs and Hindus**

**Mujahid Tajdin, 86. Interview conducted by Zubair Ghazi on 2 and 25 February 2000. At the time of Partition, Tajdin was a militant Khaksar. He now owns shop No. 154, where different types of *Naan* (a flat bread made from white wheat flour) are baked. It is located on Fateh Sher Road, Mozang, Lahore.**

At the time of the Partition of India, I was living in Mozang. Being inquisitive by nature I used to visit Hindu temples, Sikh gurdawaras, Christian churches, besides praying five times a day in the mosque. I wanted to know how people, belonging to other religions, live and preach their faiths in their religious places. Now when I look upon those years I can say that the *Angrez* (English) have done more service to mankind than any other people.

I was a very devout and active member of the Khaksar movement. When the call to create an Islamic state, to be called Pakistan, was given many of us were fascinated by that idea. I took active part in that struggle against Hindus and Sikhs. I killed four Sikhs near

Atchison College and took part in the killing, looting and burning of Hindus and Sikhs when fire was set to Shahalmi Gate and other Hindu-Sikh localities.

Attack on the Sikh Gurdawara, *Chaeveen Padshahi*, on Temple Road Lahore (this temple was built by the sixth Sikh Guru Hargobind Rai)

The Thanedar (sub-inspector or S.H.O) of Mozang Police Station, Malik Maqsood masterminded the attack on the *Chaeveen Padshahi*. He trained some of us for four days. We were to take possession of important Hindu and Sikh places when Partition occurred. He told us that if we died fighting against the non-Muslims we will be *shaheeds* (martyrs) and if we survived we will be *ghazis* (soldiers of Allah). He told us that our Muslim brothers and sisters were being killed in India, and the main objective of the training was to protect Muslims and to take revenge.

We were given a security plan to protect Mozang from Hindu and Sikh assault. Thus we established our *morchas* (defence posts) at Mozang Adda, Safan Wala Chowk, Mozang Chungi and Kanak Mandi. Those of us who took part in the training besides me were Zahoor Din Khaksar, Naseer, Bau Amanat, Hussain Ganja kabadi-player, Bashir, Rasheed, Alamgir Baloch and Shah Din.

It was the 26<sup>th</sup> of Ramadan (13 August) when we stormed the Sikh temple. I, along with five others entered the temple by climbing its high wall. We gave a *lalkar* (battle cry) to the Sikhs to come out. Nobody responded. It was pitch dark at that time. We broke open the front door and entered the temple. The Sikhs had splashed hot *kora tel* (mustard oil) on the floor with the result that our feet slipped as we walked on it. When we lit up a matchstick the oil started burning.

I took the *kabza* (possession) of the main *takht* (a long bench). We were 25 to 30 altogether. We were shouting 'Pakistan Zindabad' (long live Pakistan) and challenging the Sikhs to come out. Suddenly one of them appeared from under the *takht* with a *talwar* (sword) in his hand. He delivered a blow at me, which struck my hand and I received a deep gash on my wrist. I succeeded in snatching the sword from his hand and killed him. Meanwhile many other people had entered the gurdawara. Now, the Sikhs came out of their hidings and a hand-to-hand combat began in the darkness. *Talwars*, *churras* (big knives) and *dandas* (heavy

sticks) were used. Some pistol shots were also fired. Someone put on a fire with the help of petrol. In my opinion, Thanedar Malik Maqsood had provided the petrol to someone in our group. I myself was not informed about it. There were some 20 to 30 Sikh men and women in the temple. All of them perished in the inferno. From our side, we lost Naseer.

*How do you feel about what happened at that time? Do you regret what you did?*

With tear in his eyes, Taj Din said:

We were told that Pakistan would be an Islamic State where the *nizam* (system) established by Allah and his Prophet would again be revived. For doing that, Hindus and Sikhs, who were *kafirs* (infidels), had to be killed or kicked out of Pakistan. Only then could it be a successful Islamic state.

Once Pakistan came into being, I, like many others, began anxiously to await the revival of the true and just Islamic state and society. During the period of General Ayub Khan, I was particularly hopeful that things would change. I wrote to him and to the governor of Punjab, Nawab Amir Mohammad Khan of Kalabagh, and became very close to them. Later, I pinned my hopes on General Zia-ul-Haq. I even corresponded with the Shah of Iran and many other Muslim rulers of the world in the hope that they will do something for the glory of Islam and the uplift of Muslims. (Many certificates from such dignitaries and the bloodstained sword that he wrested away from the Sikh in the temple were hanging on the walls in which the interview took place)

However, we never got our Islamic state. Every ruler looted us. Pakistan is a very corrupt society. If all this were to happen, then why were we asked to do what we did? Sometimes at night I cannot sleep because of the crimes that I have committed. The faces of those Sikhs whom I killed are always in my mind.

In 1968 I went with a delegation from Pakistan to attend the *Urs* (annual religious festival) of Hazrat Nizamuddin Aulia at Delhi. At the border Sikhs welcomed us. They gave each of us two oranges and one apple. In Delhi I was recognised by a Hindu who used to live in Anarkali, Lahore. He was very kind and offered his help and services for anything that I might need.

It happens quite so often that I pray to God to give me *mafi* (pardon) for the murder of those Sikhs and Hindus. I have a feeling that Allah understands me and has forgiven me. We were misguided and used by our politicians.

### **Analysis**

1. What were the chief characteristics of the processes of forced migration and ethnic cleansing in Lahore?

The overall context of what happened in Lahore was, of course, the fact that the British were about to wind up their empire in the Subcontinent. State authority had begun to wane as public demonstrations increased in momentum in Punjab and Lahore. The clash over Lahore started in a situation of uncertainty for both the sides. Initially both sides adopted aggressive postures and retaliated to each other's attacks, but over time the Muslim majority gained the upper hand. The fact that Lahore was placed in western Punjab in the notional division announced by the colonial government in June must have created the psychological mindset helpful to an offensive posture.

It is, however, most revealing that a conviction that Lahore will remain in India was held at the highest levels of the Hindu-Sikh community leadership. Their faith in the greater weight of 'other factors' deriving from much greater property interests as well the religious links of the Sikhs to Lahore rather than the population majority enjoyed by the Muslims, must have been considerable. As we learn from the interviews, the idea that Hindus and Sikhs were in a majority (mistakenly) in the city was also prevalent. That the Congress and Hindu Mahasabha leaders told them not to abandon Lahore probably rendered many of them easy targets. The RSS and other Hindu militants tried their hands at counter-terror but were outnumbered, and once the Radcliffe award was made public the exodus of Hindus and Sikhs was a foregone conclusion.

From the various interviews we learn that there were Hindus and Sikhs who had reconciled themselves to living in Pakistan under a Muslim government. That they could not do so is indicative of the fact that, at least in the last stages of the Partition, a policy to cleanse Lahore of Hindus and Sikhs existed. When did it come about and at what level of command, is a question to which no authoritative answer can ever be given. At any rate, anti-Muslim

riots in eastern Punjab did away with the chances of Lahore retaining its multicultural identity.

It is interesting to note that in the well-to-do localities ugly acts of violence did not occur. School and college ties, memberships in gentlemen associations and clubs and participation in joint committees under the auspices of the government did generate a different type of social capital that made the exit from Lahore relatively safe for the departing Hindu families such as that of Ram Parkash Kapur.

The classic portrayal of the state of nature by Hobbes as a war of ‘all against all’ which always comes to life whenever the civil state disintegrates is most true in understanding the process of forced migration and ethnic cleansing in Lahore. In multiethnic, multi-religious societies such disintegration can release the most diabolical type of group animosities and hostilities. In a modified form such societies result in a war of communities. Looking at the case of Lahore, the most decisive role in the forced migration of Hindus and Sikhs was played by the absence of an impartial law and order-maintaining agency. Was the English police officer before whom Rattan Chand prostrated for help powerless because the reign of powers had passed into the hands of Muslim superiors, or was he and other British officials who stayed on in Pakistan having some perverted pleasure in seeing the natives finish off each other? One can only wonder. At any rate, magistrate Cheema personified the ultimate horror of the state becoming a party to communal conflict. To what extent and at what level were his, Thanedar Malik Maqsood’s, and that of the police inspector at Baghbanpura, activities centrally organised and planned, are impossible to determine.

One can say that similar situations existed in many parts of Punjab. Both S. Gurbachan Singh Talib and Chaudhri Muhammad Ali tell ‘true’ but partisan and partial stories. To the process of forced migration from Lahore must also be included the help given by Muslim friends to the Hindus and Sikhs when they were leaving. Had every Muslim turned against them, as Talib insists, the result would probably have been a complete genocide in Lahore. If one remembers that the Muslim goondas of Amritsar tried to put to shame their counterparts in Lahore for not finishing off the Hindu and Sikh minority, then one can infer that it was an indication of considerable reluctance on the part of the Muslims of Lahore to resort to measures leading to ethnic cleansing. There is no reliable figure given anywhere of how many people were killed in Lahore, but it is certain that the Hindu-Sikh bourgeoisie of Lahore could leave more or less safely. It was petty employees, servants,

shopkeepers and all those who had neither the connections nor the means to arrange for their departure in time that bore the brunt of communal frenzy. Many Muslims also succumbed to counter-terror from the other side. It must also be noted that the communal attacks were conducted with rather simple weapons. The use of firearms seems to have been limited. On the other hand, the use of petrol to set alight Hindu and Sikh property seems to have been used extensively, particularly from the month of June onwards. From the various interviews we learn that old friendships and good neighbourly relations did survive the onslaught of collective insanity, which gripped people during that period. In that sense what happened in Lahore was neither unique nor can it simply be a replication of something identical elsewhere.

It must be conceded that Yuvraj Krishan's thesis that communal riots as acts of violence and terrorism emanating in the civil society should be distinguished from forced migration, which occurs when state functionaries bring to bear their power and authority and collude with some sections of civil society and thus turn the tide massively against others, is certainly borne out by the findings of the present investigation. Concerted and organised forced migration, which resulted finally in ethnic cleansing in Lahore, started taking place sometimes in June.

2. What events acted as triggers to the process of forced migration and ethnic cleansing in Lahore?

Undoubtedly the Muslim League's direct action from the end of January 1947 against the government of Khizr Tiwana was the first trigger that set in motion a process, which gradually resulted in communal clashes and riots in Lahore and in other parts of Punjab. However, the conventional reference to the unsheathing of his sword by Master Tara Singh, on the steps of the Punjab Legislative Assembly followed by a vitriolic speech preaching an inter-communal war, can certainly be considered the second major trigger to the accentuation of violent confrontation. The third trigger was the massacre of Sikhs and Hindus in the Rawalpindi and Jhelum districts a few days later. It was to serve as the model that was repeated all over Punjab until ethnic cleansing had successfully been realised on both sides of the borders established by the Radcliffe Award. The fourth trigger must be the arrival of the

packet containing bangles and henna for the Muslim goondas of Lahore. The fifth trigger were the bomb blasts in the inner city by the RSS. The announcement of the notional division of Punjab on 3 June, which placed Lahore on the western side, was the sixth trigger. The seventh trigger was the formal independence days of 14 and 15 August for Pakistan and India, and the eighth and final trigger was the Radcliffe Award of 17 August.

3. How reliable is the oral history technique, and what explanations do the interviewees provide regarding the riots in Lahore?

Since the present study relies heavily on interviews as sources of oral history it might be useful to reflect upon the reliability of the information generated by them. To begin with, it must be stressed that each interview constitutes a unique specimen of experiences of pre-Partition Lahore. The interviewees are not relatives or members of any particular political party and most have never met one another. They are not presented as representative of a 'Hindu' 'Sikh' or 'Muslim' community or group point of view. They are also not to be read as representatives of various social classes or professions either. Each interview contains its own theory and explanation of what happened in Lahore in 1947, how and why? They must be read on their own merit, as serious, even passionate, accounts of a very traumatic and shattering experience.

Notwithstanding the uniqueness of each story, one can detect that they portray the changing situation in Lahore in very similar terms. Until the 1940s, Lahore is remembered mainly as a shining example of communal peace and harmony. The various books referred to in this study and interviews confirm this image. This applies across social class, profession and even religion. Even Mujahid Taj Din mentions that he visited Hindu temples and Sikh gurdawaras in search of truth and religious knowledge.

The perceptions and explanations put forth by the interviewees about what happened in Lahore in 1947 differ considerably, however. Some blame the top Muslim League leaders for those riots, others Muslim instigators from UP and Bihar, or the lower level Muslim political cadres and government functionaries, while some others emphasise the quest for an Islamic state as instrumental for a popular Muslim involvement in those riots. There are also theories that suggest a more structural explanation such as the one based on class advanced by Harkishen Singh Surjeet. On the other hand, Dr Ramanand Sagar identifies the British as the

main culprits in those crimes and blames them for the bloodshed and destruction. Some suggest that a wrong calculation on the part of the Hindu and Sikh leaders might be at the heart of the intensity of the riots. Perhaps a combination of all these factors provides a fuller and more comprehensive explanation of those riots.

#### 4. Why did communal massacres occur in Lahore?

On a general theoretical level, one can note that Lahore went through considerable expansion and modernisation during several decades before Partition. It seems that traditional Lahore could maintain, on the one hand, peaceful relations between communities and, on the other, inegalitarian social relations within and between them. Traditional values and beliefs perhaps encouraged an attitude which made people accept the status quo as something given and unalterable: the long past confirmed the authenticity of the existing situation.

The process of modernisation, however, loosened the knots that tied various segments and layers together. What we learn is that Hindu attitudes were changing for the better (e.g. the change in attitude of Som Anand's father) and within the walled city an organic, composite society had been established for quite some time, as Ashraf and Adeeb report. But such responses probably remained insufficient. Reservation of seats for Muslims had begun at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the Union Party had particularly benefited the Muslims by expanding on such policy. An upwardly mobile Muslim intelligentsia was fast taking shape. The call for a Muslim state and Islamic justice within it, given by the Muslim League in 1940 and more crucially during the election campaign of 1945-46, caught the fancy of this volatile stratum. It probably saw in the expulsion of Hindus an escape from the discriminatory and denigrating caste system that treated them as unclean. Politically it turned its back on the old system of patronage institutionalised by the Unionists and confronted head-on the nationalist movement of the Congress Party. If, now, the Punjab Congress Party was dominated by usurers-cum-traders, as Surjeet argues, then that only exacerbated the political situation. Although we learn mostly about the Muslim League's preparations for an eventual showdown over Lahore and Punjab, the interviewees also mention the preparations of the Congress, RSS, and the Hindu Mahasabha.

## Conclusion

The enquiry posed the following main question: *What happened in Lahore in 1947, how and why?*

As regards the two hypotheses, the hard data and evidence in hand are limited to test or falsify the two hypotheses in a stringent manner. One can nevertheless assert that hypothesis one, suggesting that a plan to expel by all means Hindus and Sikhs from Lahore existed at least from the beginning of the 'direct action' in early 1947, and that it was implemented without any meaningful resistance from the Hindus and Sikhs, seems less plausible. Such a conclusion can be drawn safely by rereading the interviews. Especially Ram Parkash Kapur's account of the activities of some of the top Muslim League leaders in Lahore suggests that even after Pakistan had come into being, they were urging his father to stay on. They did reverse their advice a few weeks later when Muslim refugees from East Punjab poured into Lahore. Such a decision was surely reflective of *realpolitik* rather than pre-meditated conspiracy. We also learn that the Hindus and Sikhs initially entered the struggle for Lahore in the optimistic belief that it will remain in India, and used violence against Muslims in areas in which the latter were in a minority. According to Dr Sarin, at the start of the communal conflict reports of deaths from both sides came in daily.

Hypothesis two, on the other hand, seems to be closer to the truth. The 'war of communities' began in and around Lahore and Punjab in March 1947. It was waged initially without any clear plan or strategy from both sides amid great uncertainty about whether Lahore will go to India or Pakistan. The various political, administrative and legal decisions in early June taken at the highest political level by the colonial state tilted the balance of power in Lahore in favour of the Muslims, however. In the process, a conspiracy to eliminate Hindus and Sikhs most probably started taking shape as superior numbers, organised political cadres, a partisan administration and a dissolving political authority created circumstances that facilitated its realisation. It seems more reasonable to conclude that such a conspiracy lacked central planning and leadership and was perhaps implemented at the local levels amid great uncertainty. Even in Mozang, where the Muslims held sway, the conspiracy to set fire to the Sikh temple was hatched as part of an overall strategy which was partly defensive (setting up of defensive posts around Mozang to protect it against attacks from Hindus and Sikhs) and partly offensive. This conclusion one can reasonably draw from Tajdin's interview. It is also

certain that only a handful of activists took part in pre-meditated attacks. In any case, the idea that the whole Muslim community was involved in those crimes is clearly inadmissible.

One can emphasise, however, that the situation in Lahore reflected the balance of power in a particular situation. Elsewhere things happened differently. In eastern Punjab the Sikh-Hindu reprisals against Muslims are too well known. As the Punjab degenerated into anarchy and chaos and the state practically abdicated its sovereign role to maintain law and order, the logic of survival gave birth to conspiracies on both sides to annihilate the other. Fear can convert easily into aggression, when circumstances are favourable. That the intentions and motives behind those crimes may include, on the one hand, an idealism for a separate homeland and, on the other, the more baser concerns for loot, plunder, rising ambitions to power, revenge and so on, is not unthinkable. Different sections of society that took part in those riots probably had different reasons for doing so. No social science method will ever suffice to uncover all those motivational drives.

In a more ideological sense, however, the exclusion of non-Muslims from the category of equal citizens of the state was intrinsic to the logic of a Muslim/Islamic state, even when Muslim League leaders did not admit this. Also in terms of the chronology of communal riots, it is beyond any doubt whatsoever that the first large-scale, planned slaughter in Punjab took place in the Rawalpindi division and the Muslims were the culprits. Munir asserts that Jinnah intervened to stop the carnage, but evidence of such a public stand of his or of his close associates has not been established by impartial scholarship. As regards Lahore, what happened in 1947 was a consequence of a bigger game of high politics taking place at the all-India level. Who bears the ultimate responsibility for the Partition of India is beyond the scope of the present enquiry, but Lahore certainly changed its ethno-cultural composition in favour of the Muslim majority.

However, the enquiry also posed two questions regarding post-Partition Lahore:

1. How did forced migration and ethnic cleansing impact on the demographic structure and cultural identity of Lahore?
2. Did Lahore become 'homogeneous' after Partition?

To these questions, the following answers can be proffered:

1. How did forced migration and ethnic cleansing impact on the demographic structure and cultural identity of Lahore?

A careful examination of the accounts of pre-Partition Lahore does not put us in any definitive position to pass judgement on the exact nature of inter-communal relations and interaction. The safest thing one can say is that there is no single societal pattern that one can affix to Lahore's social and cultural life. Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs did share a common Punjabi culture and participated in each other's festivals and ceremonies but each group also lived a separate existence and possessed a distinct identity. Caste restrictions were observed in some places and houses but not in all. Such a social order had survived and even thrived for centuries. Orthodox as well as non-conformist and unconventional ways of relating to each co-existed side by side. The demographic consequences of Partition for Lahore were that the major portion of its business and commercial class was effectively removed, so was the broader middle-class, which had moved into the new Hindu-Sikh residential areas, constructed from about the beginning of the 1920s. The much larger but economically backward Muslim majority was catapulted into positions of command at all levels. Such demographic transformation certainly facilitated upward mobility of a large number of Muslims. In communal terms, it became more or less a Muslim city. The Muslim population, however, received a substantial portion of newcomers, mostly refugees from eastern Punjab, especially Amritsar but also other major towns such as Jullandhar and Ludhiana, and some from the Urdu-speaking areas of northern India and Hyderabad Deccan.

In the subsequent decades, the city has expanded in all directions and new residents have continued to arrive from the other parts of the Pakistani Punjab. Many old Lahorites whose roots predate the founding of Pakistan, complain that their sophisticated city and its relaxed life style have gradually been subverted by the boorish and clumsy manners of these *nouveau riche*, especially since large number of villagers and small town dwellers, after making some fortune as migrant workers in the Persian Gulf region or in other parts of the world, have settled in the new localities on the outskirts of the city. Thus demographic change has continued unabated and from a petite city of around 700,000 in 1947, Lahore is now home to some six million people. It is very likely that the majority of the people residing there have arrived after 1947.

Over the years, Lahore's Islamic identity has become more pronounced. A cousin of mine tells the story that a friend of his who was a programme producer at the Lahore unit of the Pakistan Television was summoned by the military administrator of Lahore in the early stages of General Zia-ul-Haq's takeover of power. He was ordered to prepare a script for a television programme on the history of Lahore. Some days later, he returned with an outline. Not surprising he had begun the history of Lahore with the legendary origin of its name associated with Lav/Loh, son of Rama. The colonel listening to the script became livid with rage and demanded the deletion of any such reference. Instead the story of Lahore was to begin with the arrival in Lahore in 1039 of the sufi-saint Data Ganj Baksh from Afghanistan along with the army of Masud of Ghazni. Thus in one sense, Lahore embodies the underlying philosophy of ethnic cleansing, and efforts to erase all traces of its non-Islamic historical and cultural roots should be interpreted as part of the project of purifying it of all un-Islamic antecedents.

## 2. Did Lahore become 'homogeneous' after Partition?

This brings us perhaps to the most challenging intellectual problem the present investigation must solve: was pre-Partition Lahore a deeply divided or an exemplary multicultural city? Now, Lahore went up in flames in a matter of a few months, some even say, in a few weeks, in 1947. In that sense it must have been a plural, deeply divided society where persistent cleavages and the related socio-economic and cultural inequalities were deep and permanent. Once the troubles started it easily went asunder. Such an explanation seems obvious, but it cannot satisfactorily explain how until the 1940s Lahore functioned as a successful multiculturalism order. If one recalls, not only what the interviewees have said but also what Ashraf, Adeb and Lahori (who are Muslims) write, one is driven to believe that Lahore before 1940 was a very successful example of inter-communal amity and understanding. From a methodological point of view it is therefore wiser not to describe and categorise such complex and diverse societies in definitive terms.

Rather one should emphasise the responsibility of actors, especially those in positions of influence, power and authority, in preserving or subverting the peace. Forced migration and ethnic cleansing are man-made disasters and not anything else. Good government and progressive policy can mitigate tensions so that plural societies can transform into tolerant,

multicultural ones and, vice versa, manipulative and immoral politics can subvert the peace and tranquillity of composite, pluralist societies. In the end, the way out is not the end of politics but better politics as Rousseau proposed. What happened in 1947 was the failure of politics. Lahore could have retained and improved its multicultural foundations but the forces of confrontation and conflict prevailed.

This brings us to the crucial question: Did Lahore transform into a homogeneous city (by implication one that is free of fissures and deep cleavages) when the non-Muslims left? Indeed after the 1947 holocaust, no comparable slaughter of citizens has taken place in Lahore, but then, a collapse of the state and structure of authority comparable to 1947 has not taken place either. So, one cannot definitely claim that Lahore is now immune to large-scale communal slaughter and ethnic cleansing. Homogeneity is not entirely a matter of objective description and fixed boundaries. Subjective feelings and inputs of political entrepreneurs play an important role in identity formation and perceptions. Thus in 1953 a virulent anti-Ahmadiyya agitation broke out in Lahore. Some Muslim League leaders masterminded it. There was considerable loss of life and property. The same Ahmadiyya community had played an active role in the promotion of the Pakistan demand in 1947 and the Muslim League had included them among the Muslims. In 1974 they were found to be holding beliefs contrary to the teachings of Islam and declared a religious minority by the Pakistan National Assembly. From the late 1980s onwards, the Sunni and Shia communities have been the victims of sectarian violence and terrorism. Sectarian militias have been engaged in recurrent and protracted terrorism in Lahore. They have not hesitated to kill people belonging to the other sect even if they were praying or mourning death. Desecration of each other's mosques, graveyards and such other places has taken place. In future, the Sunni-Shia divide might prove fatal to the homogeneity of Lahore and Punjab if the obsession for confessional purity is allowed to keep eliminating all anomalies. One is driven to conclude that varying ethnic characteristics by themselves do not lead either to harmony or conflict. Rather, actors put them into such a role. What might appear to be a stable, multicultural community at one time may dissipate into disparate and hostile sub-groups at another time and it is not impossible that group differences and tensions can be transcended by enlightened policy and attitudes.

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72. Pran Nevile, p. 13.
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  86. *Ibid.*, p. 120.
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  88. *Ibid.*, p. 118-19; 121.
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98. Ibid., pp. 444.
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100. Ibid.
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### **Interviews in chronological order**

1. Pran Nevile, 75. 18 October, 1999, at the India International Centre, New Delhi.
2. Som Anand, 69. 18 October, 1999, at the New Delhi Press Club.
3. Rattan Chand.,79. 19 October, 1999, at his residence in Darya Ganj, in Delhi.
4. Ram Parkash Kapur, 75. 20 October, 1999, at his residence in Delhi.
5. Amar Nath Sehgal, 77. 20 October, 199, at his residence in Delhi.
6. Jamna Das Akhtar, 83. 20 October, 1999, at his residence in Delhi.
7. Harkishen Singh Surjeet, 81. 21 October, 1999, in the CPI (M) head-office in New Delhi.
8. Yuvraj Krishan, 79. 21 October, 1999, at the India International Centre, New Delhi.
9. Prem Dhawan, 76. 22 October, 1999, at his residence in Juhu, Bombay.
10. Nanak Singh Broca, 90 . 23 October, 1999, at his residence in Bombay (Mumbai).
11. Dr Jagdish Chander Sarin, 79. Interviewed on 24 October at his residence in Delhi.
12. Dr Ramanand Sagar, 82. 25 October at the India International Centre, New Delhi.
13. Jasjit Sharma. (age not recorded probably in late 70s) 26 October, 1999. At her residence in Delhi.
14. Retd. Colonel V. K. Kapur. 63. 26 October, at his residence in Delhi.
15. Mujahid Taj Din, 86. 2 and 25 February, 2000 at his residence in Lahore.