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Partition between India and Pakistan: how has it changed our outlook on humanity?

The sound of a cricket bat striking the ball echoes through Sindh, a province in Pakistan. Putting the bat down quickly, he runs from base to base and scores six runs. Having won the match, he and his friends ran back home, making it just in time for dinner. My grandfather, Raj Khanchandani, was a Hindu living in Pakistan before the partition. At a young age he became accustomed to a wealthy lifestyle. Mr. Khanchandani's grandfather was a landlord and used to give land to the local people in exchange for a portion of their cultivated land. "He owned lots of land and also got an earning out of it. When I was a young kid I saw that he had so much money, it was unbelievable. He had, you know, kind of gold coins and other things. He was a rich person" (Khanchandani). Taking a trip down memory lane, Mr. Khanchandani comes across his favorite memory in his grandfather's bungalow, a mansion of sorts. He recollects, "The first fish killed would always go to my grandfather's kitchen for us to enjoy. We didn't know where the food was coming from but we didn't care because we were just young kids just enjoying the food that came. I enjoyed that life" (Khanchandani).

At just seven years old my grandfather became a refugee and was forced to flee his home and move to India. As tensions started to arise it was no longer safe for him and his Hindu family to continue living in Pakistan. Realizing this, Mr. Khanchandani's family felt that they needed to move to India in order to escape the violence. He was outside playing with his friends when he found out he had to leave Pakistan. "I didn't know why they [my dad, my grandfathers and sister

in laws] were packing. Then I heard that we are going to be separated from this country” (Khanchandani). Forced to leave behind his whole life and start fresh, Mr. Khanchandani and his family faced many challenges throughout their transition from Pakistan to India. He suffered a culture shock; from learning a new language to making new friends, he felt disconnected with his peers. Many of them didn’t understand how hard he and his family had to work just to build a new life for themselves.

As he grew older, Mr. Khanchandani realized all that he had overcome and learnt from all his hardship. “We went from rich to poor refugees,” Mr. Khanchandani said, “and as a refugee we had to adopt a new language and culture. It was tough adopting a different culture and new people.” Despite the struggles he and his family faced when they migrated from Pakistan to India, he has kept the mindset similar to the younger generation of today. Mr. Khanchandani has accepted the past and is looking forward now: “Muslim and Hindu, we’re the same too.”

The Partition of India and Pakistan is an important part of history that is often overlooked. Like the Holocaust, the Partition was a great genocide. However, this time, both Muslims and Hindus were pitted against one another. The British’s “divide and conquer” plan had taken a once-united country and broken it into two. With Muslims craving a leader of their own, the British saw the perfect opportunity to instigate them by turning them against Hindus and encouraging them to find a leader of their own. “The rulers changed from alien "white" to native "brown" sahibs. In the more than 40 years since then, there has been an increasing sense of frustration among the individual states that crave greater autonomy” (“South Asian Solution Is Real Autonomy”). It’s crucial to see how much loss and hardship the Partition caused. However, there are also many things that it has taught us. The Partition is a piece of history that will never be forgotten but that doesn’t mean that today’s generation won’t be able to ever move past it. The

bond between Hindus and Muslims was severed almost immediately after the Partition. Today, we see many of the younger generation working towards rebuilding their relationship with each other.

We still see the scars today that the British left behind when they split India into two countries. "... Pakistan was created by the British government through the strategy of divide and conquer which is why India and Pakistan became separate countries," my grandfather explains. When the border was created in 1947 the British didn't declare Kashmir as part of Pakistan or India. Still to this day, arguments arise about who Kashmir belongs to. And due to these controversies, there are a lot of military personnel that populate that area making it hard for those that live there to have a sense of a "normal life." (Lalwani).

The move to India was rough on Mr. Khanchandani and his family. They were accustomed to a wealthy lifestyle and now after being forced out of their home they were forced to start over in a new environment without the same resources. There was no room on the train for all their belongings so they could bring only what they could physically carry themselves, leaving them with no choice but to abandon their wealth and valuables buried in the walls of their bungalow. At the station, they were greeted by angry and impatient Muslims who were going through everyone's bags and taking away their jewelry or nice clothes. There was so much commotion between fighting for seats to escape the many Muslims that had climbed aboard the train as well. "They were slaughtering each other and I could hear the voices of all those people in pain. I couldn't sleep for months and even years after. Still sometimes it comes in my dreams and I get scared or sometimes I see something like a movie and it gives me goosebumps thinking about it" (Khanchandani).

After being on the train for thirty-six hours with very little food in their tiffin (lunch box), they had finally arrived in Rajasthan. Afraid of how they were going to be treated, they were surprised how caring people were there. “As soon as we came to the Rajasthan border in India, we were given free food as a refugee. We accepted the food and ate it because we were very hungry” (Khanchandani).

Even today, there is an ongoing battle between India and Pakistan to determine which country Kashmir belongs to. However, we see the younger generation less bothered with the tensions created by the older generations. The friendships between Hindus and Muslims of our generation provide hope that humanity still exists within us and we can't let the past hold us back. Similarly, in Steven R. Weisman's article about how cricket unites Pakistan and India, he writes, “Instead of fighting each other... Indians and Pakistanis in white flannels are nowadays delighting millions of fans by cheerfully competing in stadiums throughout the country” (Weisman). It has been a long journey for Hindus and Muslims to get to this point in their relationship. We have seen that it can happen, we can become friends with one another instead of enemies. Progress is still slow between both countries but I have hope that one day, putting aside all borders, we will reunite as long lost friends and our countries will heal.

Now retired, Mr. Khanchandani spends six months of the year in Indore, India and six months in St. Paul, Minnesota. He loves spending time with his family, especially his grandchildren who love hearing the stories of the past. Learning about the hardships he had to face has allowed for us to see things from a different perspective and help us understand not to take things for granted. My grandfather has taught me many things, but one that has always stuck with me was his view on humanity. “Man is a man you know, people are people, that doesn't mean they should be disrespected. We respect each other and we should be friendly with each

other, and we should be polite with each other also. That's the way it's supposed to be"
(Khanchandani).

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