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Government of India

Partition Horrors Remembrance Day

14 August

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Partition Horrors Remembrance Day



Honorable Prime Minister
Shri Narendra Modi

"Partition's pains can never be forgotten. Millions of our sisters and brothers were displaced and many lost their lives due to mindless hate and violence. In memory of the struggles and sacrifices of our people, 14th August will be observed as Partition Horrors Remembrance Day."

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Background

The Partition of India was not just a redrawing of maps—it was a profound human tragedy.

The line drawn in 1947 upended millions of lives. People became strangers in their own homes, neighborhoods turned desolate, and centuries-old bonds of coexistence shattered in an instant. Nearly six million non-Muslims were forced to leave the region that became West Pakistan, while around 6.5 million Muslims migrated there from Punjab, Delhi, and other parts of India. A similar wave of displacement unfolded in the eastern part of the country: an estimated two million non-Muslims fled East Bengal (now Bangladesh), and by around 1950, another two million had taken refuge in West Bengal. During the same period, nearly one million Muslims left West Bengal. The death toll from this upheaval is estimated to be anywhere between half a million to over a million.

The photographs, letters, maps, and objects displayed here bear witness to lives once intertwined—suddenly and violently torn apart.

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The Mountbatten Plan: A Nation's Division Announced



The press conference held in New Delhi where the partition plan was unveiled. Seen left to right – Jawaharlal Nehru, Lord Ismay (Mountbatten's advisor), Viceroy Lord Louis Mountbatten, and Muhammad Ali Jinnah.

The Historical Background of Partition

The last Viceroy of India, Lord Mountbatten, held a historic press conference. It was only the second and final time in British India's history that a Viceroy addressed the press. Over 300 journalists had gathered—representatives from the United States, Russia, China, Europe, and every corner of India—listening intently to the Viceroy's announcement. This announcement came to be known as the Mountbatten Plan—a formal declaration about both India's independence and its partition. Accelerating the original timeline by nearly a year, Mountbatten set August 15 as the date for the transfer of power. He also proposed the outline for partition, including the division of Punjab and Bengal. The journalists present raised pointed questions—chief among them: what would happen to the people forced to migrate as a result of this division?

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"They Will Transfer Themselves": A Tragedy in Making



LARGEST NET SALES of any Daily Newspaper Printed in Northern, Southern, Central or Western India. REGD. No. B111

The Times of India
ESTABLISHED 1838

NO. 132. VOL. CIX. BOMBAY: WEDNESDAY, JUNE 4, 1947 PRICE TWO ANNAS DO NOT PAY MORE

WAY OUT OF INDIAN DEADLOCK

BRITAIN'S PLAN FOR SMOOTH TRANSFER OF POWER

Immediate Dominion Status Granted

PEOPLE ASKED TO DECIDE PARTITION QUESTION

Present Constituent Assembly Not Disturbed

MR. CHURCHILL'S SUPPORT
Speedy Legislation

Mr. Winston Churchill sprang a surprise on Tuesday when, speaking in the House of Commons after Mr. Attle had made the statement on India, he promised support to the legislation necessary to give parts of India full Dominion Status.

"It should not be right," he declared, "that such legislation Should be deemed contentious or that any long delay should elapse after it is introduced and before it is passed into law."

(See Page 5)

THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT HAVE PROMISED IMMEDIATE DOMINION STATUS TO INDIA—THIS YEAR—, AND THEIR PLAN BY WHICH THEY WILL END THEIR 200 YEARS OF RULE PUTS FULL RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE FUTURE OF INDEPENDENT INDIA DIRECTLY ON THE SHOULDERS OF THE INDIAN PEOPLE, LEAVING THEM THE CHOICE OF PARTITION OR OF MAKING UP THEIR DIFFERENCES FOR UNITY'S SAKE.

Two-Fold Purpose

The two-fold purpose of the plan, which was announced simultaneously to the Indian people and in both Houses of Parliament on Tuesday, is (1) to make possible the maximum degree of harmony and co-operation among the Indian

Lord Mountbatten.

"UNIFIED INDIA BEST SOLUTION"

Viceroy's Appeal

"THERE IS INDIAN CONSCIOUSNESS"

NEW DELHI, June 3.

The Viceroy, broadcasting tonight announced that His Majesty's Government had accepted his proposal that they should transfer power to one or two Governments of British India, each

Only Practical Method

PREMIER'S VIEW

Plan Commended To Commons

LONDON, June 3.

The Prime Minister, Mr. Attlee, announced in the House of Commons today that the British offer of Dominion Status to one or two successor Indian authorities had been favourably received by all the three parties represented at the conferences held by the Viceroy with the Indian leaders during the past few days.

The announcement was received with loud cheers.

Mr. Attlee who was announcing the Government's plan for transfer of power to Indians said that the British Government wished to make it clear that they have no intention of attempting to frame the ultimate constitution for India. This was a matter for Indians

MR. NEHRU COMMENDS PLAN TO NATION

Mr. Jinnah Hopeful Of League's Acceptance

SARDAR BALDEV SINGH CALLS IT "SETTLEMENT"

NEW DELHI, June 3.

BROADCASTING to the nation immediately after the announcement of the British Government's plan, Pandit Jawaharla Nehru said: "It is with no joy in my heart that I commend these proposals to you, though I have no doubt that this is the right course.

"The proposal to allow certain parts to secede, if they so will, is painful for any of us to contemplate. Nevertheless I am convinced that our present decision is the right one even from the larger viewpoint."

Mr. Jinnah, who followed Pandit Nehru, said the League's final decision could only be taken by the League Council on Jun 9, but so far as he could gather, "on the whole, the reaction i League circles in Delhi has been hopeful."

Sardar Baldev Singh, who also spoke, commended the plan as the best under the circumstances.

Pandit Nehru in his broadcast said: "Nearly nine months ago, soon after my assumption of office. I spoke to you from this place. I told you then that we were on the march and the goal had still to be reached. There

meet my people and to learn abo their troubles at first hand.

"Today I am speaking to you another historic occasion when vital change affecting the future India is proposed. You have ju heard an announcement on behalf the British Government. This a nouncement lays down a procedu for self-determination in certa areas of India. It envisages on t

June 1947: Announcement of the partition in the newspaper

When asked about the possibility of mass displacement due to Partition, Mountbatten gave an answer that history would come to haunt:

"Personally I don't see it (people moving out) . . . some measure of transfer will come about in a natural way . . . people will transfer themselves."

— The Tribune, June 5, 1947

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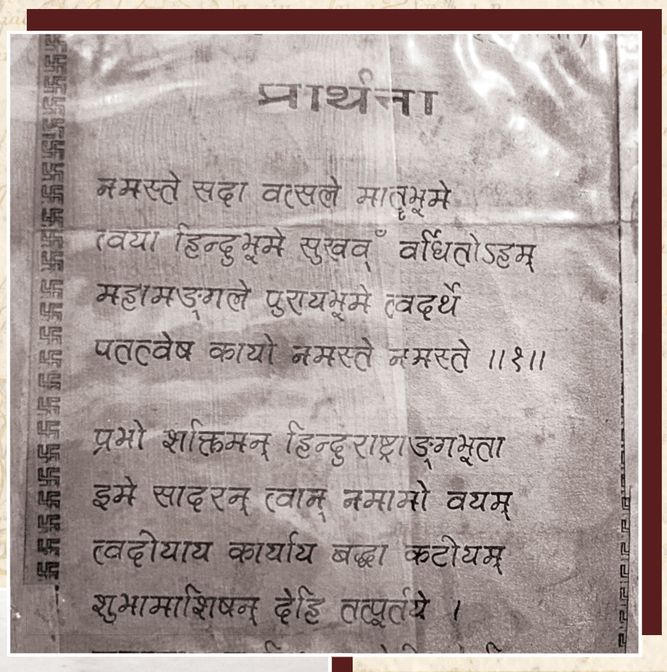
Remembering the Journey of Derawal Hindus

In hindsight, this statement feels painfully naïve—if not willfully blind. That “little bit of migration” would soon unravel into one of the largest and bloodiest mass displacements the modern world had ever seen.More than 13 million people were uprooted from their land, their homes, and their past. Among them were the Derawals — a Hindu community displaced in 1947 during the Partition of India from Dera Ismail Khan, a region nestled near the Indus Valley.









This exhibition brings alive their untold, unheard story. Every photograph, every object, every thread on display carries the living memory of the Derawal Hindus. Through personal belongings, heirlooms, and everyday items, it reveals how memory, faith, and the will to survive endured — even in a time when the future seemed uncertain and shrouded in haze.

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Seeking Refuge in Uncertain Times









For many Derawals, Partition was not just a date on the calendar — it was the moment when they had to leave behind everything they had known. Families left their homes and neighborhoods believing they would return in a few months. Refugees from Dera Ismail Khan crossed the Indus River by steamer or took a train from Darya Khan to Lahore — and from there, they made their way to cities like Amritsar, Jaisalmer, and Jaipur. In the years that followed, as the Indian government began allocating land, homes, and shops, these families slowly started rebuilding their lives across different parts of the country.

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Partition and the Silent Struggles of Women







These photographs belong to a family that found a new home in Jaipur after being displaced from Dera Ismail Khan during the Partition of 1947. Among them was Munni Devi, sister of the late Shri Heera Nand Bhatia. Munni Devi was widowed in childhood, and she was 37 years old when she made this long journey. She remained in Jaipur with her brother until her passing in 1985.

Partition left millions homeless, but for women, the tragedy was even more harrowing. Their social standing added layers of complexity to their struggles — and for many, those cruel memories remain like deep wounds, etched in the mind to this day.

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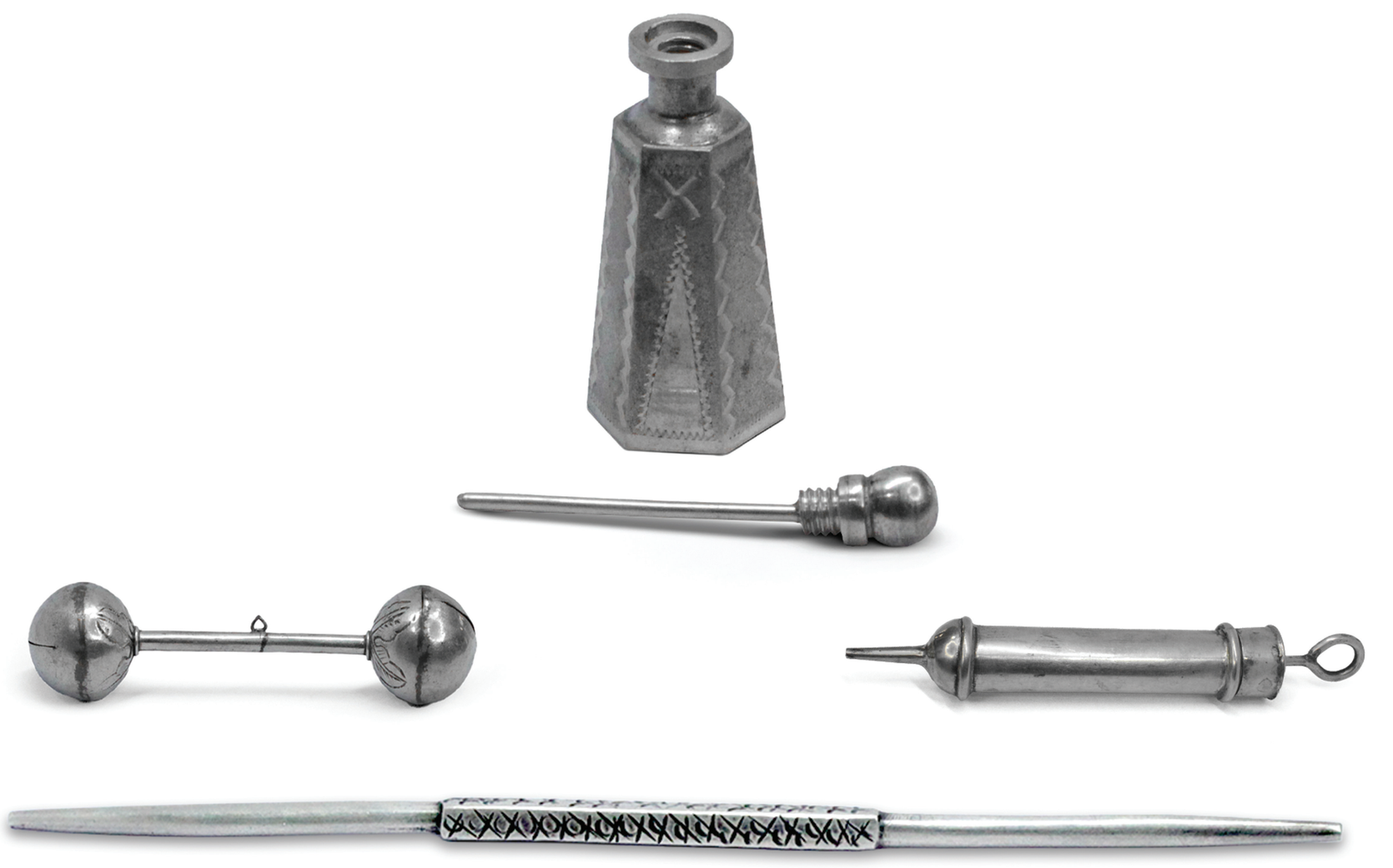
Silver and Gold: Jewellery as Memory and Lifelines



During Partition, personal objects made of silver and gold — such as kohl containers, maang-tikkas, and other jewelry — served as portable assets.

Carrying these items provided families with financial support during a time of great uncertainty and displacement.

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Silver and Gold: Jewellery as Memory and Lifelines





This image shows a carved silver mirror and a waistband, heirlooms belonging to a Derawal (Bhatia) family in Jaipur.

The waistband is adorned with 19th-century “one-anna” coins, all bearing the name of Queen Victoria of Britain.

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Silver and Gold: Jewellery as Memory and Lifelines





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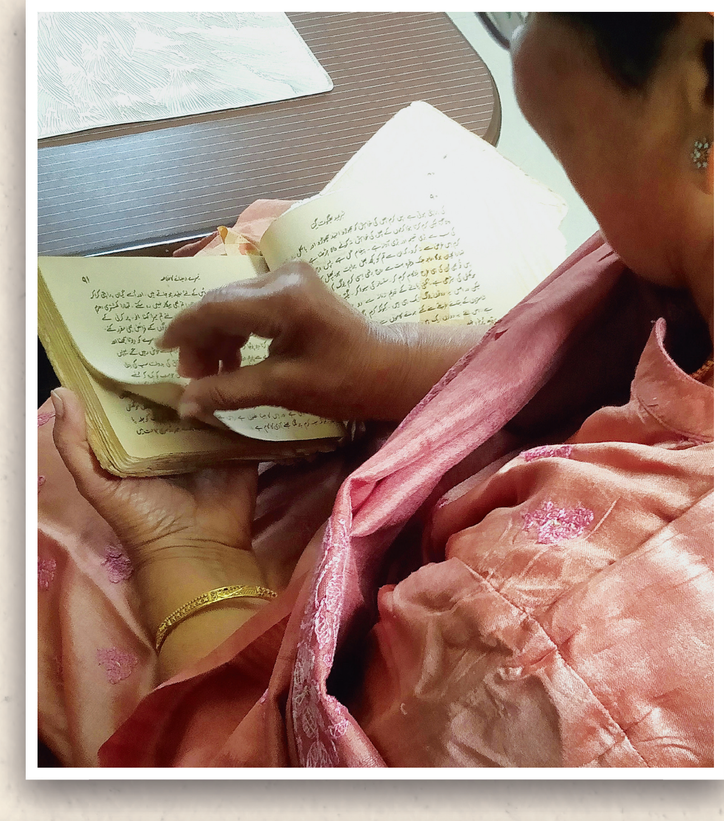
Language and Legacy of a Homeland Left Behind









Mrs. Tuteja holds an old Urdu edition of the Bhagavad Gita — a cherished family heirloom brought by her father from Dera Ismail Khan during Partition. In Dera Ismail Khan, the devout Derawal community read the Gita in Urdu, blending spiritual practice with local linguistic traditions.
Once a sacred text for daily worship, today it lives on as a vessel of memory.

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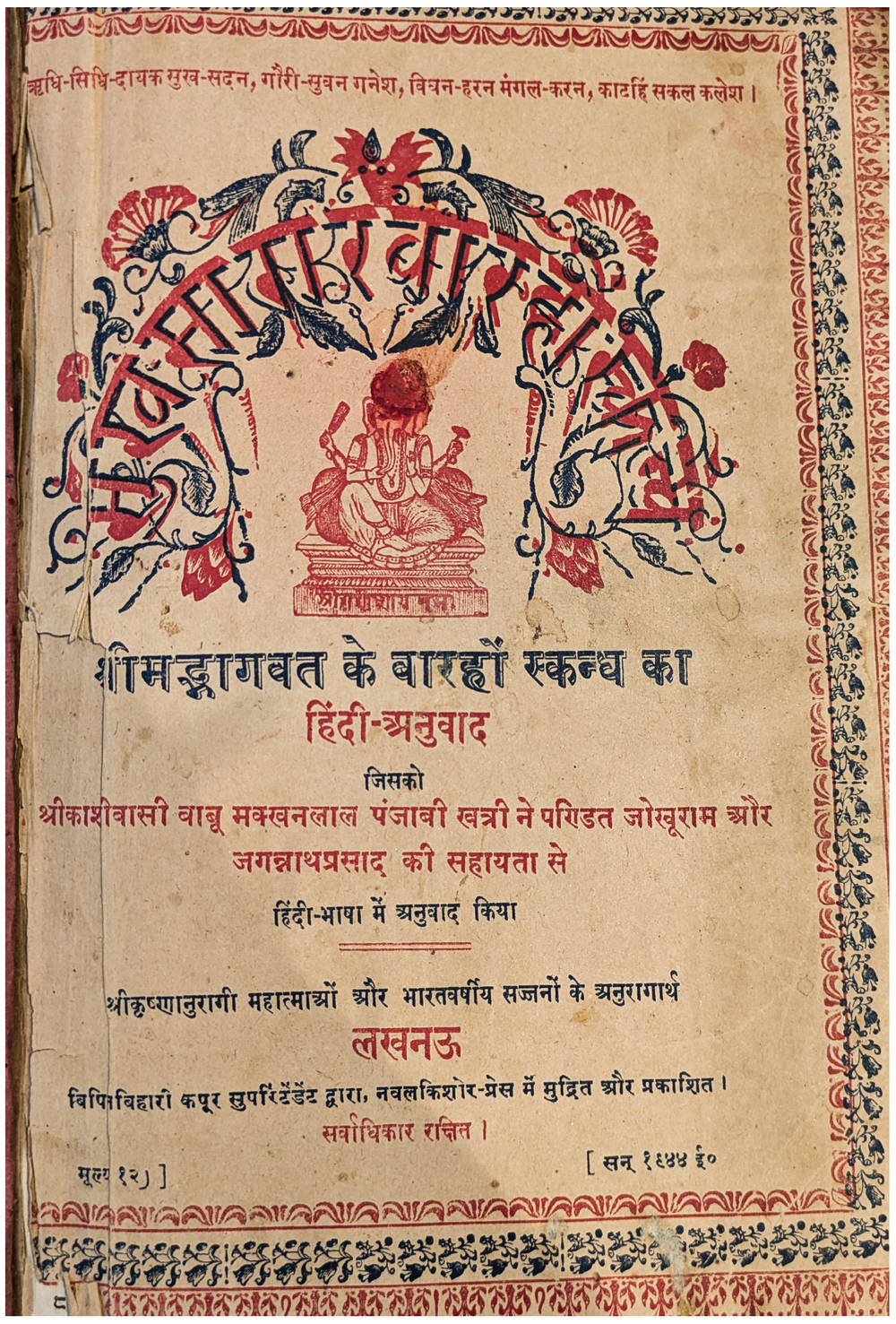
Bhagawat Purana That Journeyed Through Faith Across Borders





This 1944 Hindi edition of the Bhagavata Purana was published in Lucknow and gifted to a bride in Dera Ismail Khan at the time of her wedding.

After Partition, the book traveled with the family to Jaipur and remained a part of their daily prayers for many years. Determined to preserve their religious traditions, the family brought it with them after leaving Dera Ismail Khan.

The female head of the household recited it every day. After her death, the sacred book was passed on to her granddaughter, who still treasures it today as a living thread connecting her to ancestral land, faith, and generational memory.

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Ramleela by the Indus





This old photograph on the left shows children dressed as Ram and Lakshman during a Dussehra celebration in Dera Ismail Khan.

For the Derawal Hindu community, Dussehra and Baisakhi were among the most important festivals.

Dussehra was celebrated with nine days of Ramleela performances, culminating in a grand effigy-burning of Ravan by the banks of the Indus River.

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The Man Behind Bleeding Borders: Cyril Radcliffe



(seated, centred) Sir Cyril Radcliffe, a prominent British barrister, was assigned the crucial task of drawing the borders between India and Pakistan.

Sir Cyril Radcliffe, who had never set foot in India before, was given just 40 days to draw the new borders between India and Pakistan. He never visited the villages, never studied the rivers or forests, never understood the ties between agriculture and industry — and yet, he drew the lines.

In Bengal, Partition was being carried out on religious lines instead of economic logic. But it was Punjab that bore the worst consequences of Radcliffe's boundaries. Overnight, large numbers of Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs became minorities — leading to horrific riots, mass displacement, and widespread killings. Borders were being drawn, but there was no plan for the migration that would follow. Radcliffe never returned to India. He believed both sides would have killed him if he had visited the newly formed nations after the partition.

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A Nation Torn Apart


SUNDAY, Hindusthan Standard AUGUST 25, 1946.

DEVIL'S DANCE IN CALCUTTA





The line Radcliffe drew impacted Punjab and Bengal the most.

Bengal was already burning in the fire of communalism. The 1946 Calcutta riots had laid the groundwork for communal tension across India. Communities that had lived together on the subcontinent for centuries in a spirit of coexistence now stood divided. All of this was part of the British policy of “Divide and Rule,” where they fueled cultural and religious differences to tighten their grip over power.

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Famine and Fire: Suhrawardy's Bengal



Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy

In the communal riots that took place in Calcutta in 1946, local and regional political leaders played a role in fueling the fire — among them, the Muslim League's Chief Minister of Bengal, H. S. Suhrawardy, is considered the most responsible. He was accused of inciting mobs against Hindu citizens in the state by delivering inflammatory speeches in Kolkata.

Suhrawardy's political ideology was that once in power, one should never relinquish it — no matter the cost. To secure his position in power, he allegedly used public funds to form a private army of thugs who would silence his opponents through violence.

During the Bengal famine of 1942, which devastated the region, Suhrawardy was also accused of hoarding grain from the starving public and engaging in black market sales, through which he amassed crores of rupees.

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Kolkata's Darkest Hour Before Partition



On 16 August 1946, the Muslim League declared "Direct Action Day." The aim was to send a clear message to the British and the Indian National Congress that if needed, Indian Muslims were ready to achieve Pakistan through direct action.

In Kolkata, the man orchestrating this was Suhrawardy. Provoked by his words, frenzied Muslim mobs poured into the streets of Kolkata on the morning of 16 August — shouting religious slogans, armed with sticks, iron rods, shovels, and makeshift weapons. Hindu civilians were brutally attacked, their bodies thrown into open drains across the city.

So terrifying was the atmosphere that the police, paralyzed by fear, virtually disappeared from the streets during the violence.

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The Day a State Collapsed



MONDAY STATESMAN, AUGUST 19, 1946.

The Statesman.

(With which the FRIEND OF INDIA is Incorporated.)

PUBLISHED SIMULTANEOUSLY FROM CALCUTTA AND DELHI.

VOL. II. No. 22806 REG. No. C193 CALCUTTA, MONDAY, AUGUST 19, 1946. TWO ANNAS.

VER 270 KILLED, 1,600 INJURED IN TWO DAYS

Riots

ROCKET BURSTS OVER SWEDISH TOWN

STOCKHOLM, Aug 16.—Window panes were broken in Malmo when a rocket projectile exploded over that town today The authorities are searching for fragments of the projectile which was reported to have been seen falling to the ground.—Reuter.

SOEKARNO TO GIVE UP "DICTATORSHIP"

REQUEST TO SHARIAR TO FORM CABINET

BATAVIA, Aug 16.—The Indonesian President, Dr Soekarno, is expected in Indonesian Republican circles to give up his "dictatorial" powers to a new Cabinet which he has asked Dr Shariar, former Premier, to form, the Netherlands News Agency said today. Dr Soekarno assumed full powers fully after Dr Shariar and other Ministers had been kidnapped

The yacht Grille, presented to Hitler by the German nation and now in British possession, is to be sold by the Admiralty. It was from the yacht, now lying at West Hartlepool, that Adm Doenitz announced Hitler's death.

Latest Treaty Proposals

QUALITY

There is TRUTH in our Quality

MEANING THAT THE FURNITURE IS EXACTLY AS IT SHOULD BE

MODERN FURNISHERS

38, PARK MANSIONS - PARK ST. CALCUTTA.

CALCUTTA DEATH ROLL 200, WITH 1,500 INJURED

Crowds Fired on Today: Planes over Riot City

ARSON and death have swept Calcutta and today, second in the Moslem campaign of 'direct action,' the jittery city heard New Delhi Radio report that so far at least 200 persons have been killed and 1,500 injured. The city fire brigades have had more than 40 calls to outbreaks.

In the city's hospitals, choked with victims, surgeons and nurses worked all night at the task of catching up with the arrears of injured, some of them desperately hurt, who were brought in cars or on the shoulders of their friends.

Today the bodies of people killed with knives, sticks and other weapons were still being collected from some streets.

Normal city life was practical at a standstill, and there were no milk or newspaper deliveries today

A strong force of police, who yesterday used tear gas on the crowds, opened fire on several occasions again today to disperse crowds. R-

ing lathis — bamboo staves. The city was without public transport, both tram and bus services having stopped.

The British independence plan for India does not concede the Moslem League demand for Pakistan—a separate Moslem state.

Pandit Nehru, Congress Party president, met the Viceroy, Lord Wavell, today.

Jinnah Condemns

Pandit Nehru said today, "Our programme for forming



"Hello twins!" two young holidaymakers enjoying yesterday's fine weather.

Britain to End Leopard Men Killings

Lagos, Nigeria, Saturday.—Britain is making a big drive to stamp out the "leopard men", an African secret society that specialises in killing in the manner of leopards.

The "leopard men" generally will kill anybody for 100 manillas (8s 4d and a goat for sacrifice before the deed is committed.

Part of the equipment of the "leopard man" is a carved wooden snake which is placed in the victim's path in the lonely bush to bring him to a halt.

The victim is then skewered through the neck and scratched with a pronged instrument used to imitate the claws of a leopard.—Reuter.

Food Minister Says—

Bread Saving Came at Right Time

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A City Stained by Blood

Riot Ultimatum: "Join Islam Or Burn"

CALCUTTA, Oct. 20. A.A.P.— Principal motives behind the lawlessness in the Noakhali district of eastern Bengal were mass conversions to the Islamic faith and the abduction of women, according to a staff correspondent of the conservative newspaper "The Statesman."

"All villages in this area have accepted Islam," said a Hindu correspondent in Noakhali, in a letter released by the Bengal Press Advisory Committee. "A huge mob gave us the ultimatum to join Islam or be burnt."

Villages had been attacked, houses burned, and some women carried off, according to evacuees who have arrived in Calcutta from the Noakhali area. About 1000 more evacuees have arrived.

"The Statesman" says about 150,000 persons and 400 villages are affected by the mob violence. It quotes a staff correspondent as saying that 10,000 persons had left the interior and were sheltering at Chandpur.

A correspondent of the Moslem "Morning News" reports that stories of mass conversion and the abduction of women were entirely untrue and were only intended to excite communal passions and oust Bengal's Moslem League Ministry.

IN BRIEF

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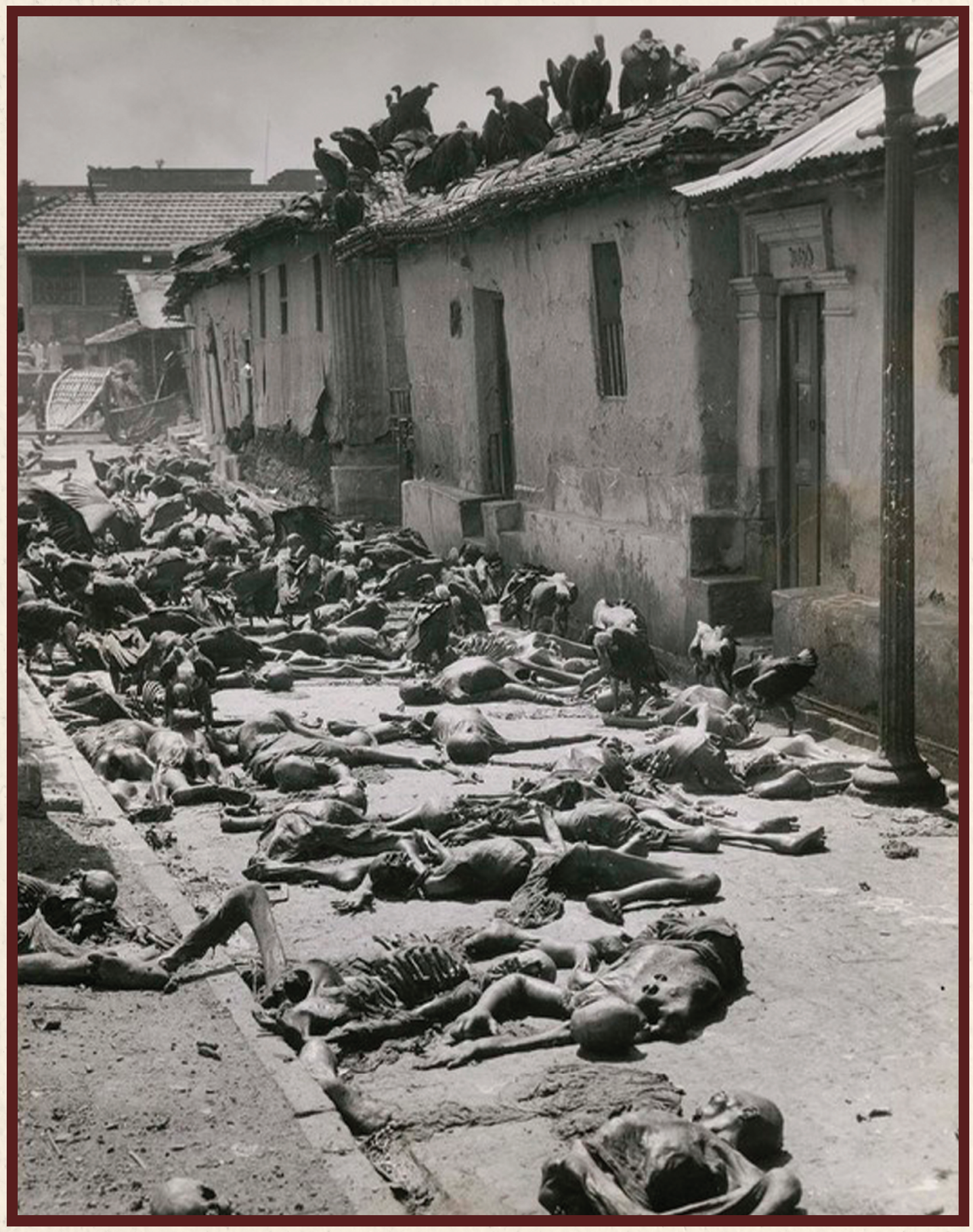
A Witness to Two Human Tragedies



In 1946, Kolkata witnessed the first wave of large-scale religious massacres. Nearly 5,000 people were killed in the violence.

American photojournalist Margaret Bourke-White, who had witnessed the gates of Nazi concentration camps open just a year earlier, wrote after seeing the streets of Kolkata:
“This place felt like Buchenwald.”

Buchenwald was one of the largest and most notorious Nazi concentration camps in Germany.

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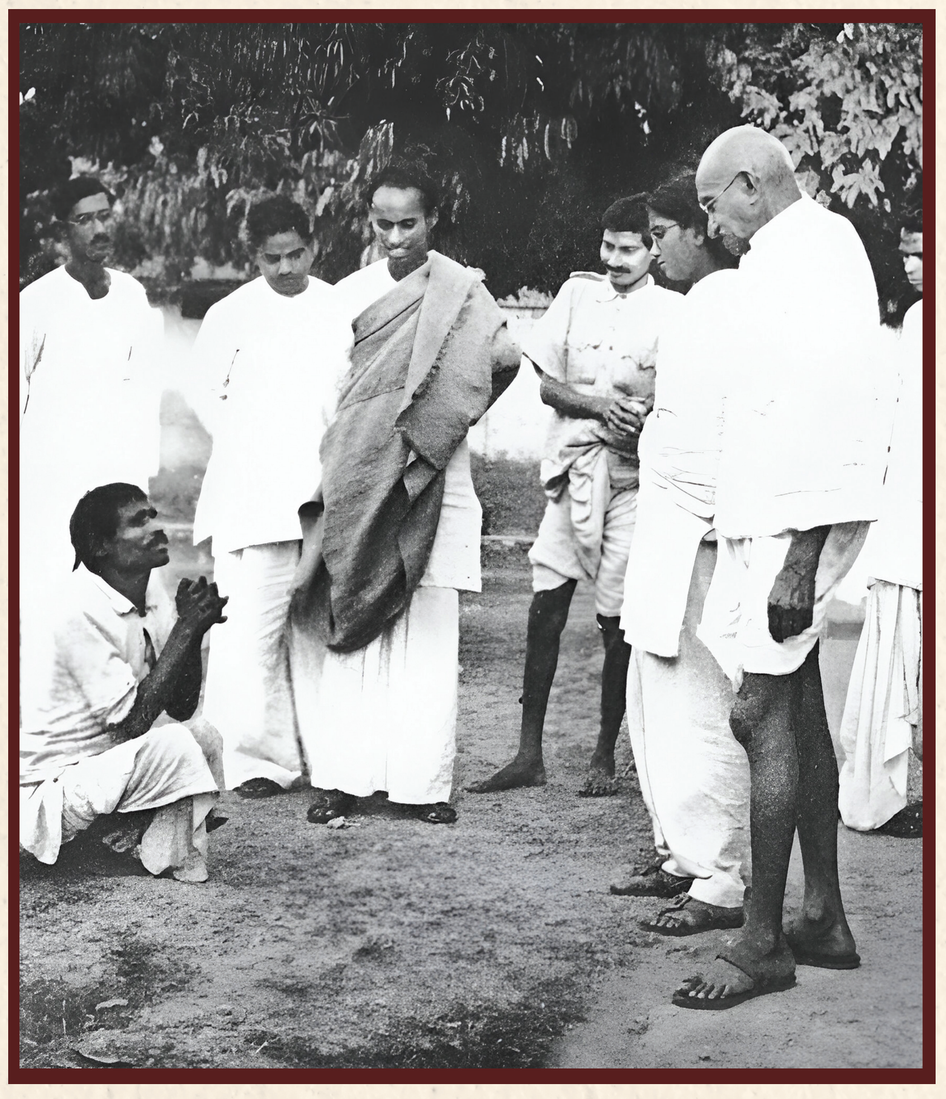
Noakhali Carnage and Gandhi's March for Harmony





The communal fire ignited against Hindus in Kolkata soon began to engulf other parts of Bengal. Just a few months after the "Great Calcutta Killings," violence erupted in Noakhali as well.

This brutality deeply shook Mahatma Gandhi. He immediately travelled to East Bengal and spent nearly four months walking barefoot from village to village, spreading a message of non-violence and communal harmony.

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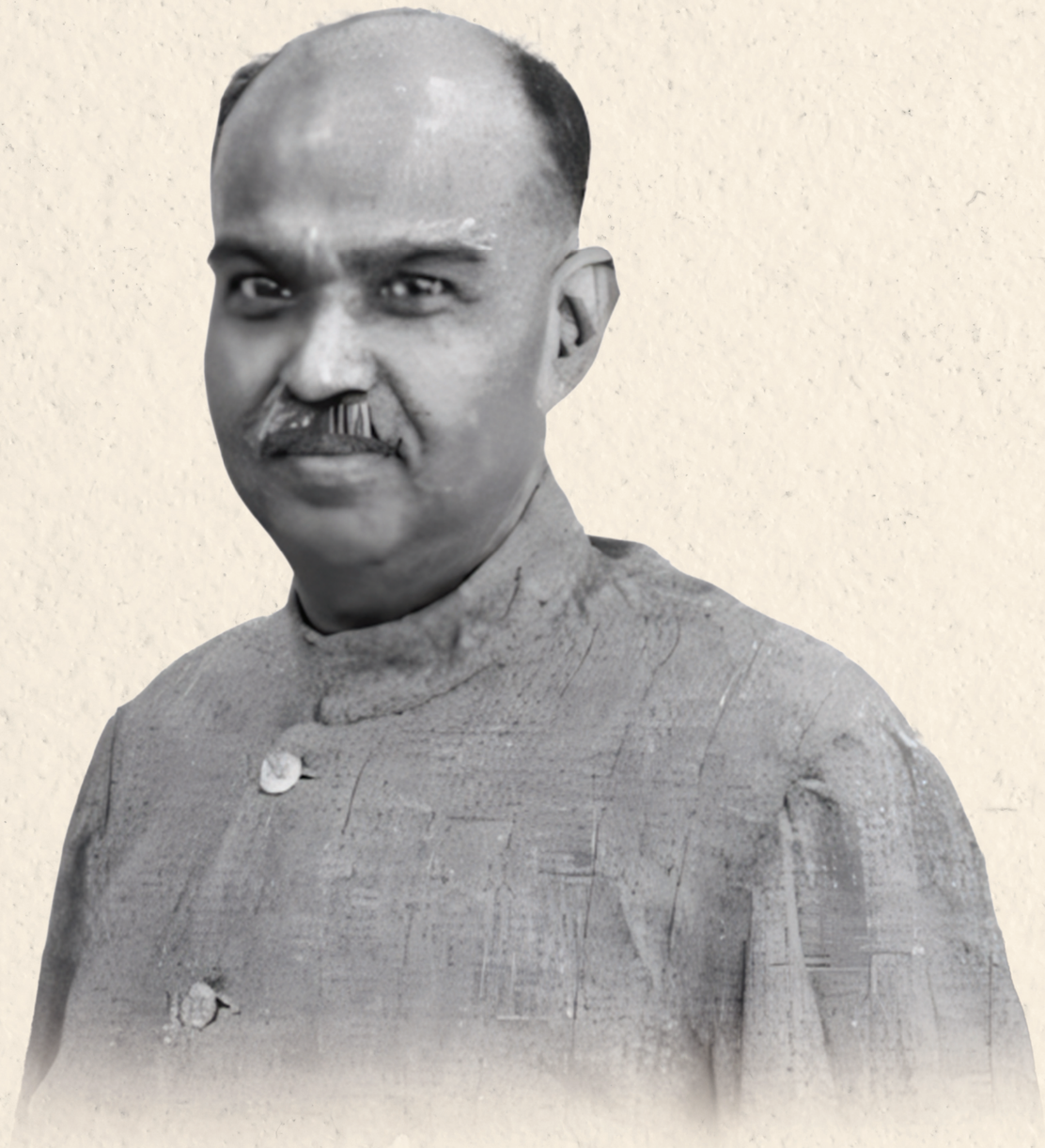
PARTITION HORRORS
REMEMBRANCE DAY

Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee and his Unsung Efforts



When we talk about efforts to douse the flames of communal violence, the Noakhali episode finds the most space in our history books — and Mahatma Gandhi's role during that period is widely discussed.

But when Bengal was burning, there were also some silent heroes who worked tirelessly to quell the violence, away from the limelight.

Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee was one such name — a man who helped prevent Bengal’s history from taking an even darker turn. And yet, we know so little about his true contributions.

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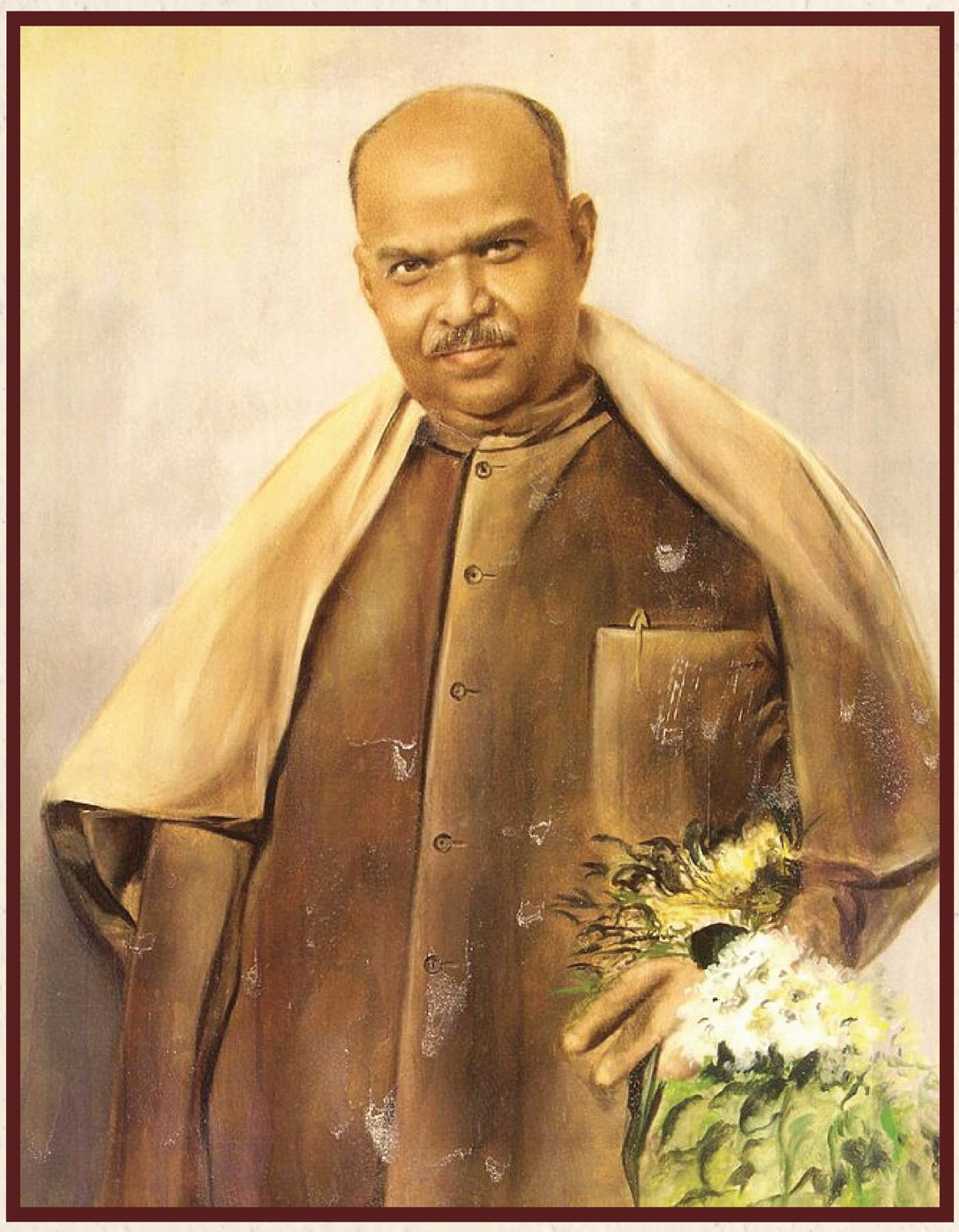
The Founding Ideologue of a New Political Vision



- Syama Prasad Mookerjee was a lawyer, educationist, and political leader. He served as a Cabinet Minister in the first government of independent India.
- In Kolkata, he became the youngest Vice-Chancellor of a university in 1901.
- When he was appointed Vice-Chancellor of Calcutta University, he was only 33 years old. He held this post for four years.
- In 1939, he joined the Hindu Mahasabha in Bengal.
- In 1940, he was elected President of the Hindu Mahasabha.
- In 1951, he founded the Bharatiya Jana Sangh, which later evolved into today's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

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The Partition of Bengal and Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee's Role



It was due to the tireless efforts of Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee that a part of Bengal remained with India.

- Thanks to his contribution, West Bengal was formed, and Kolkata remained its capital as an integral part of the Indian Union.
- Dr. Mookerjee strongly opposed the idea of the entire Bengal being included in Pakistan and advocated for the creation of a separate province as a homeland for Bengali Hindus.
- His strong, well-reasoned, and timely advocacy for the partition of Bengal inspired a large number of people to support his cause.

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The Architect of West Bengal



- Mobilized Public Opinion and Garnered Intellectual Support
- Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee met with Viceroy Lord Mountbatten and mobilized public opinion in favor of creating West Bengal by consulting with prominent intellectuals such as R.C. Majumdar, Jadunath Sarkar, Radhakumud Mookerjee, Meghnad Saha, P.R. Thakur, and G.D. Birla, along with various sections of Bengali society.
- The creation of West Bengal was undoubtedly one of Dr. Mookerjee's greatest achievements.

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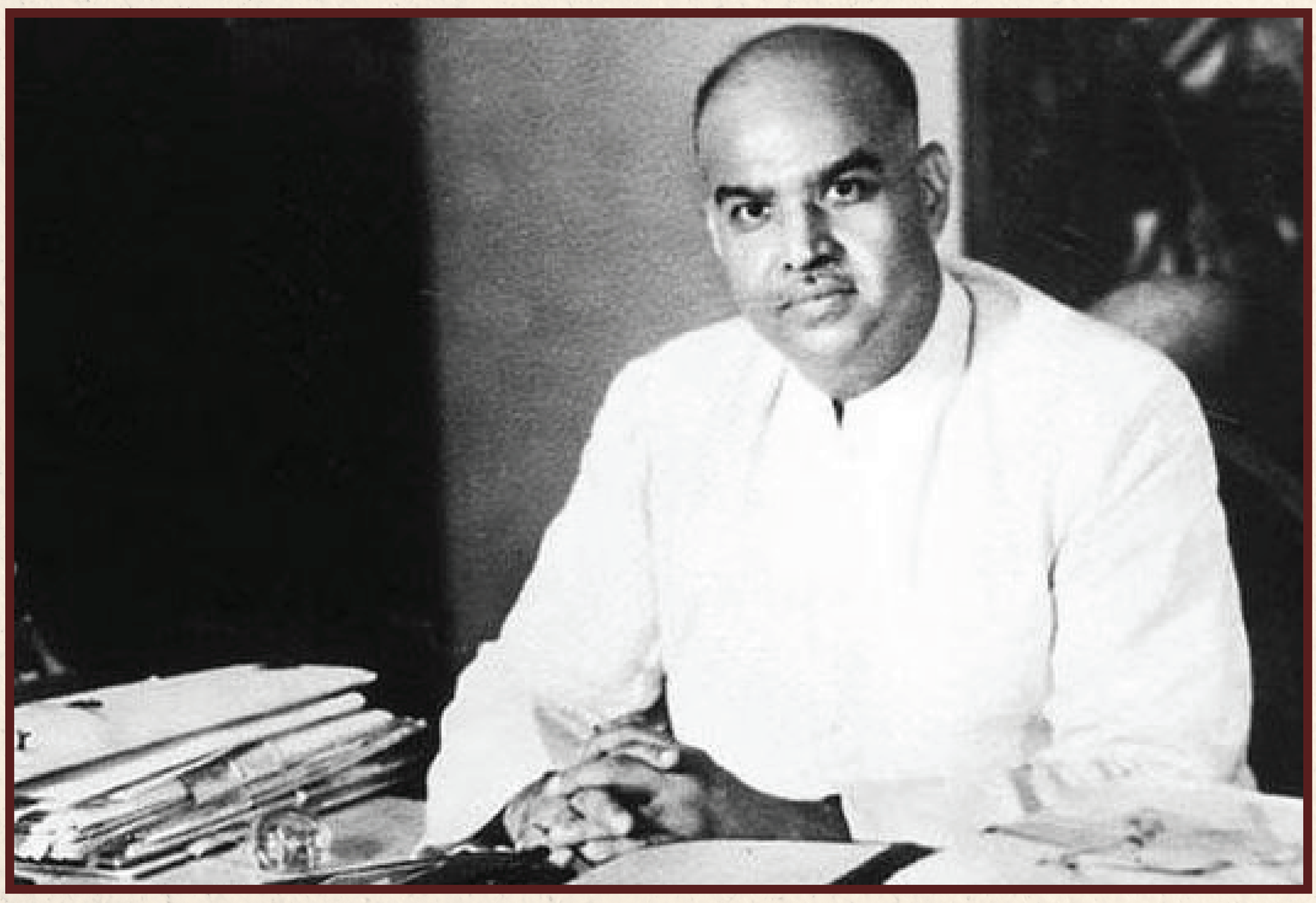
Mookerjee's Letter and Creation of West Bengal



On April 23, 1947, Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee held a detailed discussion on Bengal with Lord Mountbatten.

On May 2 of the same year, Mookerjee also sent a long letter to Mountbatten.

On June 20, 1947, the decision to create West Bengal was finalized.

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Dr. Mookerjee's Leadership in Relief Efforts during the Direct Action Day Violence in Bengal



PAINT-CEMENT & BUILDING MATERIAL
CHANDI CHARAN NAYAK

Amrita Bazar Patrika
75th YEAR OF PUBLICATION

CALCUTTA UNDER MOB RULE

JINNAH DECLINES NEHRU'S OFFER
Congress To Go Ahead With Formation Of Interim Govt.

India's Freedom In No Time
People Reminded Of Tasks Ahead

CABINET MISSION IN INDIA.

161 Persons Killed And Over 800 Injured
CURFEW PROCLAIMED
Orgy Of Looting, Rioting, Stabbing & Incendiarism
LEAGUE'S 'DIRECT ACTION' DAY SEQUEL

Calcutta was handed over to unchecked mob rule yesterday — 16th of August, the direct action day as announced by the Muslim League.

There was widespread looting, rioting, stabbing and incendiarism all over the city. The police were conspicuous by their absence from most of the places. Wherever they appeared after frantic calls for protection they hardly interfered with rioters.

Over 800 persons were removed to different hospitals of the city with injuries. The number of death upto 1-30 a.m. was given as 161. This does not give the correct figures of dead and injured for many persons dead or dying were found lying in the street unattended towards the nightfall.

Troops have been moved into the city and stationed in police headquarters. Curfew has been ordered in the city from 9 p.m. to 4 a.m. [Bengal Time].

Mr. H. S. Suhrawardy, Chief Minister of Bengal, interviewed by A. P. I. late last night said that the situation was improving.

No incidents were reported from anywhere else in India.

BANK STRIKE TO-DAY
Mass Meeting Postponed

BRITISH DESIGN IN INDIA
Denial By Foreign Office

ALLIED DESIGN IN ITALY AND GREECE
Molotov's Charges Denied By Mr. Alexander

Vision Of Ideal State
Gandhi's Reply To Question

- On August 16, 1946, the Muslim League's Direct Action Day unleashed four days of orchestrated communal violence.
- Under the leadership of H.S. Suhrawardy, the Muslim League government declared a holiday during this period, which enabled mobs to loot, set fires, and commit murders while the state remained silent.
- British officials described the situation as "uncontrolled barbarism."
- This wave of terror soon spread to Noakhali, where massacres,

Dr. Syama Prasad's Leadership in Relief Efforts

- He undertook several initiatives:
- Formed the Hindu National Guard.
- Led rescue, relief, and protection missions.
- Personally visited riot-affected areas.
- Organized civil defense for citizens.

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Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee's Historic Speech Against Direct Action Day

On 20 September 1946, in the Bengal Legislative Assembly, Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee delivered a powerful speech supporting a no-confidence motion against the Muslim League government led by H.S. Suhrawardy. In this address, he directly held Suhrawardy responsible for the "Great Calcutta Killings" of 16 August 1946. He stated:

“Let me say this that what has happened is not the result of a sudden explosion, but it is the culmination of an administration, inefficient, corrupt and communal, which has disfigured the life of this great province. But so far as the immediate cause is concerned, right reference has been made by members belonging to the Muslim League and also to the opposition that we have to look to the resolution that was passed at Bombay at the all-India session of the Council of the Muslim League. Now what happened there? It is said, on behalf of the Muslim League that the Cabinet Mission proved faithless to Muslim interests and thereby created a situation which has had no parallel in the history of Anglo-Muslim relationship in this country. What did actually the Cabinet Mission do? The Muslim League, the spoilt and pampered child of the British imperialists for the last thirty years, was disowned for the first time by the British Labour Government … (Loud noise from the Government benches) … I know it that members, when they hear the bitter truth, can hardly repress their feelings.”

- (Bengal Legislative Assembly, 20 September 1946)

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A Patriotic Voice in the Constituent Assembly



Elected to the Constituent Assembly from Bengal

- After the devastation in Bengal and the horrific Calcutta killings, Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee came to Delhi, where he began to emerge as a national leader.
- After being elected to the Constituent Assembly from Bengal, he became a prominent voice for the Hindus of East Bengal and a staunch defender of constitutional nationalism.
- From the outset, he opposed the Partition, advocated for a strong and sovereign Centre, and warned against the dangers of a weak federal structure.
- He rejected the notion of special rights based on religion, supported the idea of equal citizenship, and opposed the existence of separate electorates.
- He was a firm advocate of civil liberties, educational reform, and a Uniform Civil Code, and consistently stood for a united India rooted in justice, equality, and cultural integrity.

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The Most Massive Displacement in History

Despite tireless efforts by countless leaders—from Mahatma Gandhi to Syama Prasad Mookerjee—the exodus could not be stopped.

It came to be known as the largest human-made migration in history.

Within a span of just one year, nearly 15 million people crossed the borders hastily drawn by the British Empire. Millions were forced to leave the land of their ancestors—their homes, their fields, their roots—and set out toward an uncertain future.

Generations had built homes brick by brick, but now people had to wrap their lives into a single bundle overnight.

Everyone was faced with just one haunting question: what to take, what to leave behind?

Lives loaded onto bullock carts, dreams tied in bundles, saris peeking out of half-open sacks, a family photograph, or an inherited utensil brought along as a memory of better times— all of it told the story of a pain inflicted by politics and endured by the people.

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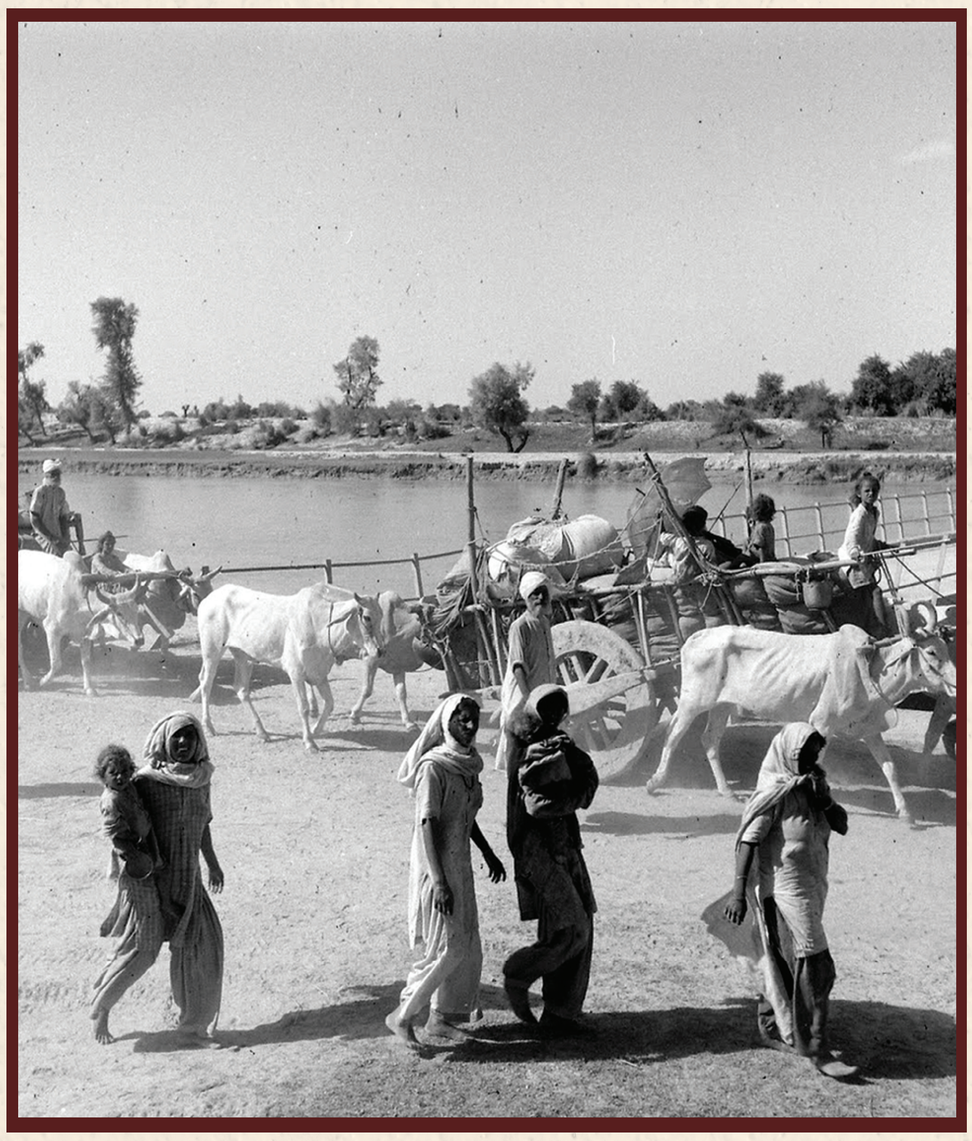
Generations Forced to Migrate— Their Burden Carried on Their Shoulders









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The Burden of Memories and the Bundle of Hopes





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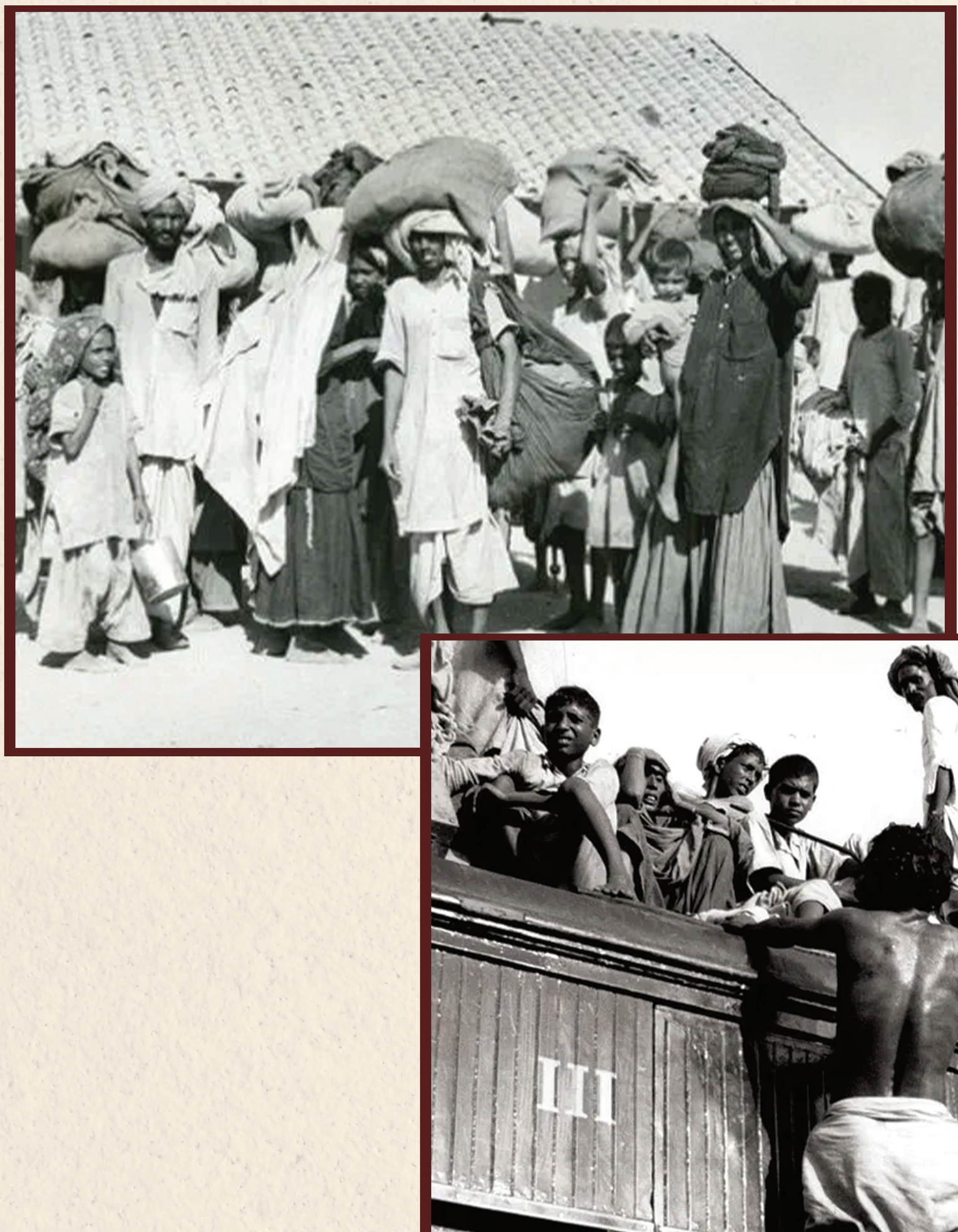

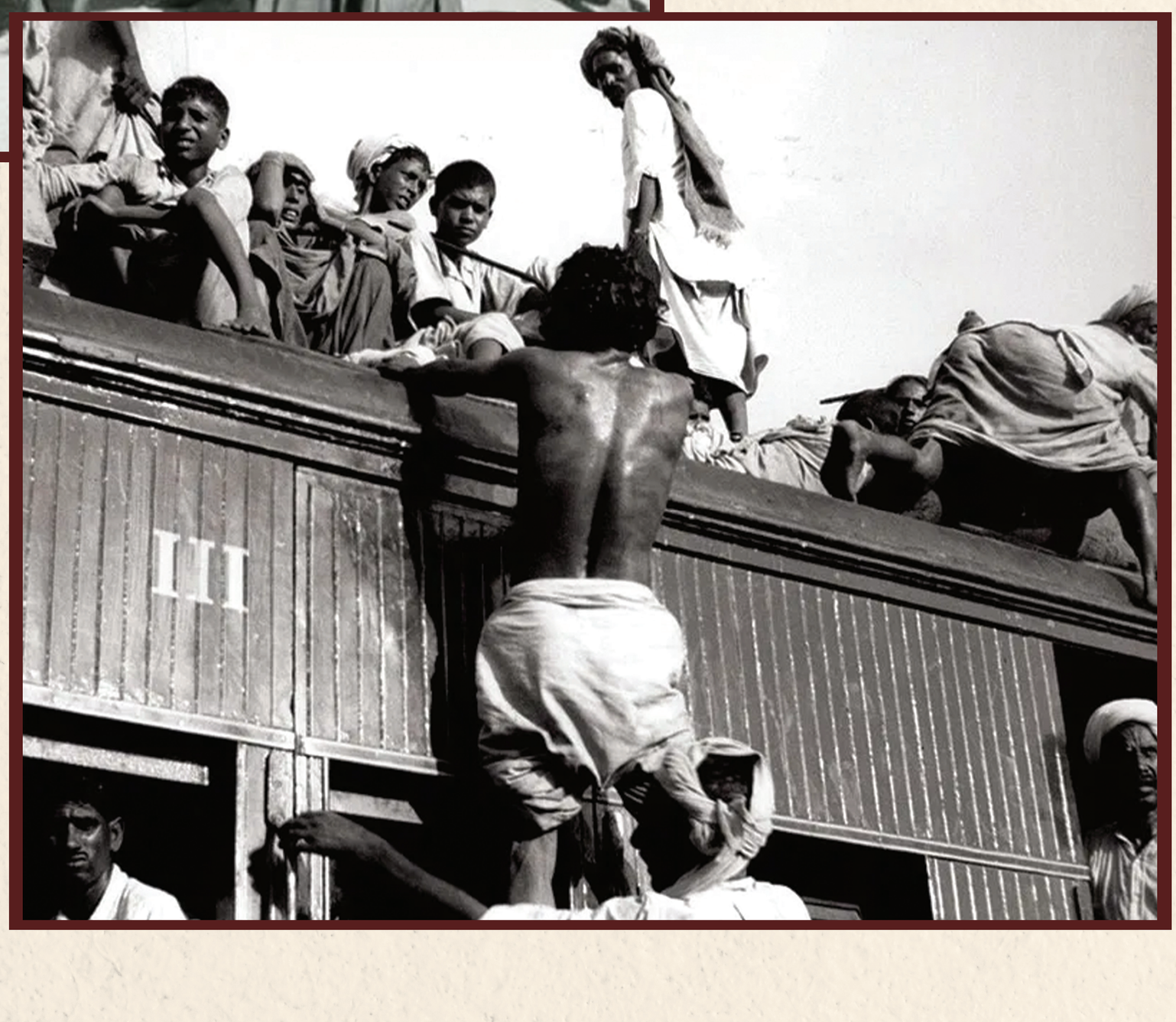

At the time, over 46 percent of Karachi's population—the first capital of Pakistan—was Hindu. As a result, during Partition, a large number of Hindus were forced to flee.

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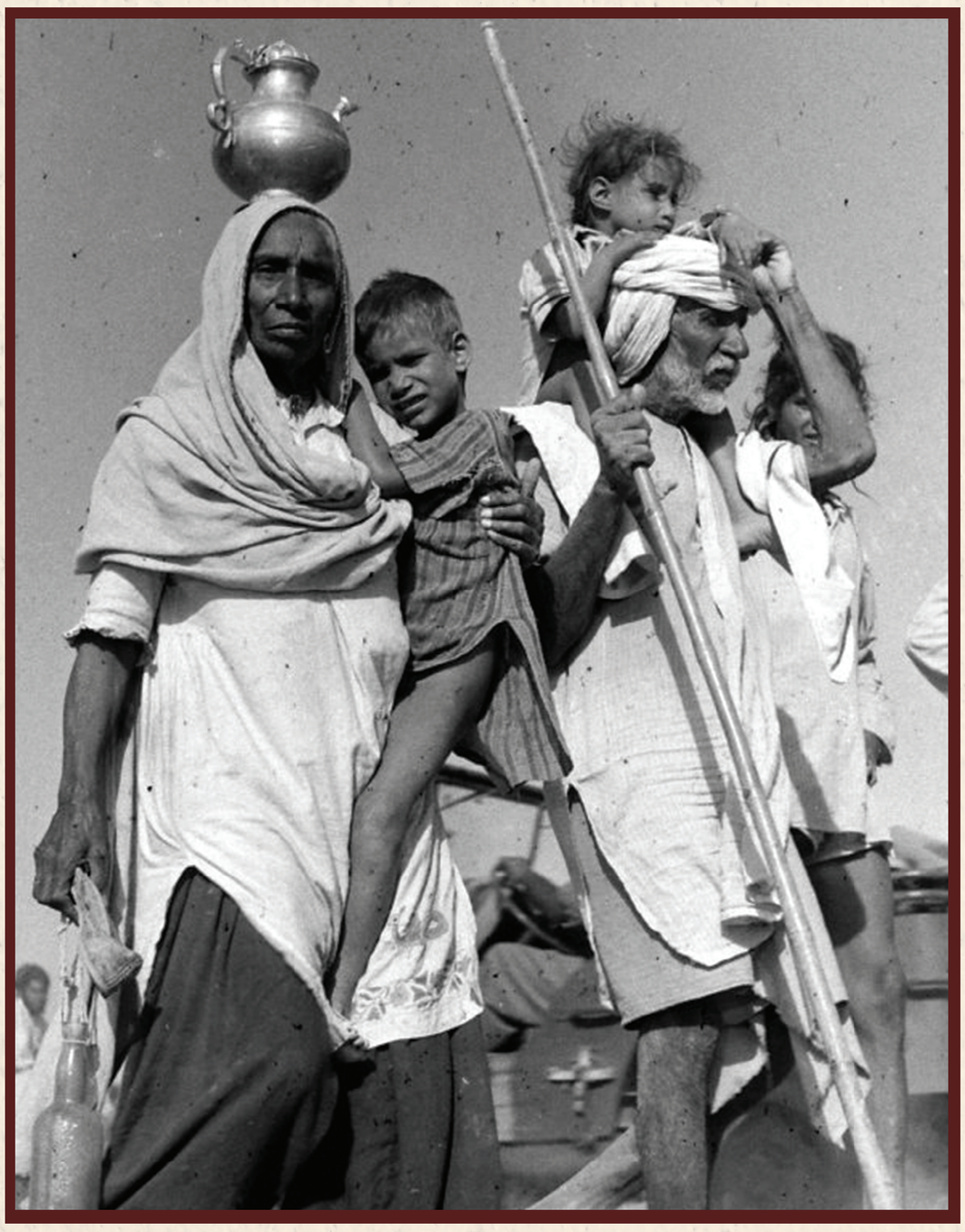
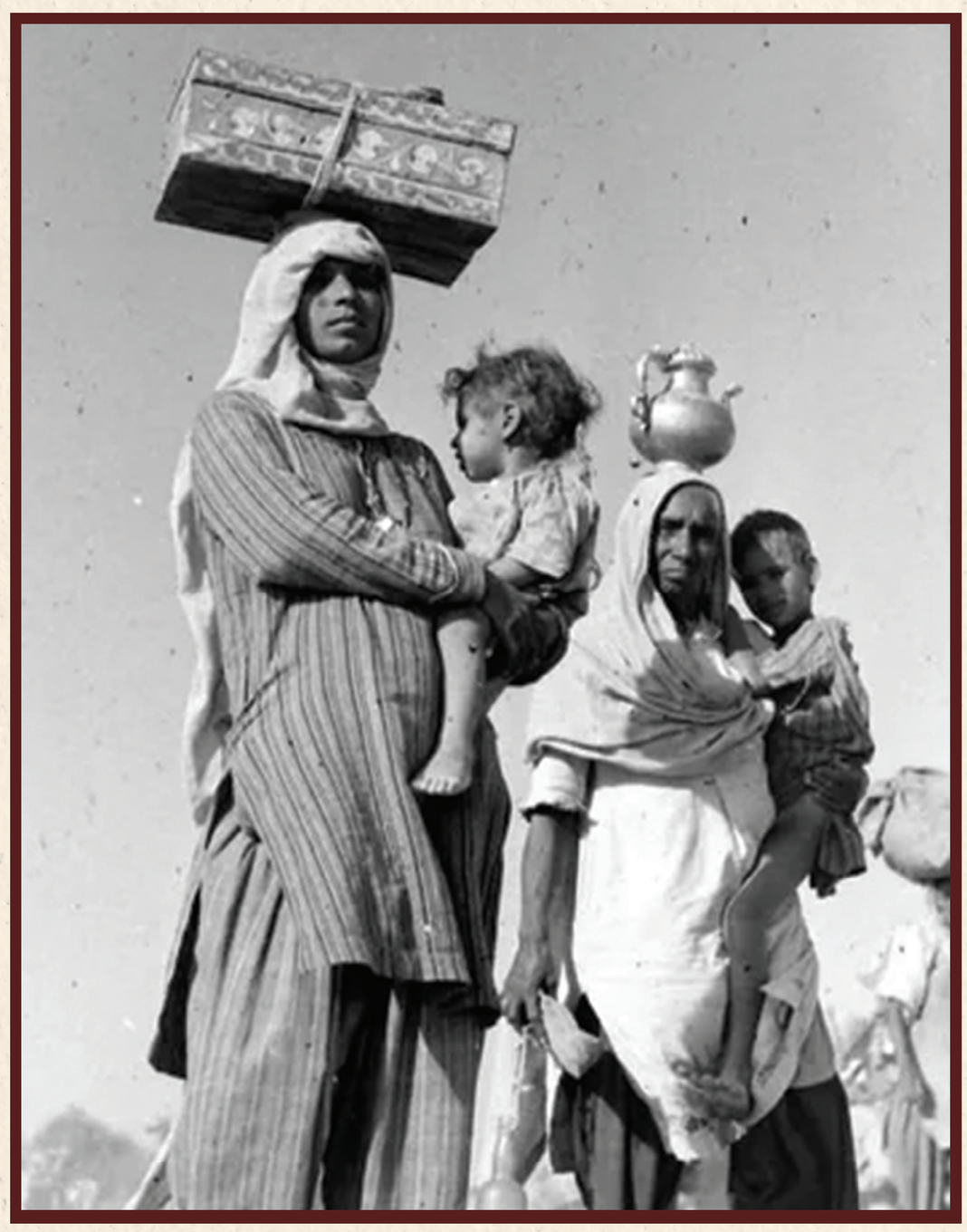
The brunt of Partition was borne most severely by women— statistics reveal that around 55,000 Hindu and Sikh women were abducted.







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Trains that Carried a Nation's Pain



In 1947, millions of people were forced to migrate across the newly drawn borders between India and Pakistan. Trains played a crucial role in this massive migration. Between 15 August 1947 and 8 September 1947 alone, an estimated 700,000 refugees travelled by train. To move people on such a vast scale from one place to another, not only passenger trains but goods trains were also used. This was not just a geographical relocation—it was a deeply painful and traumatic migration on emotional, social, and spiritual levels.

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Clinging to Hope: A Crowded Exodus

The atmosphere of fear was so intense that everyone just wanted to reach safely. As a result, every inch of space available in the trains—whether it was the empty space between the bogies or even the roof of the train—was fully used. People squeezed themselves into whatever space they could find.

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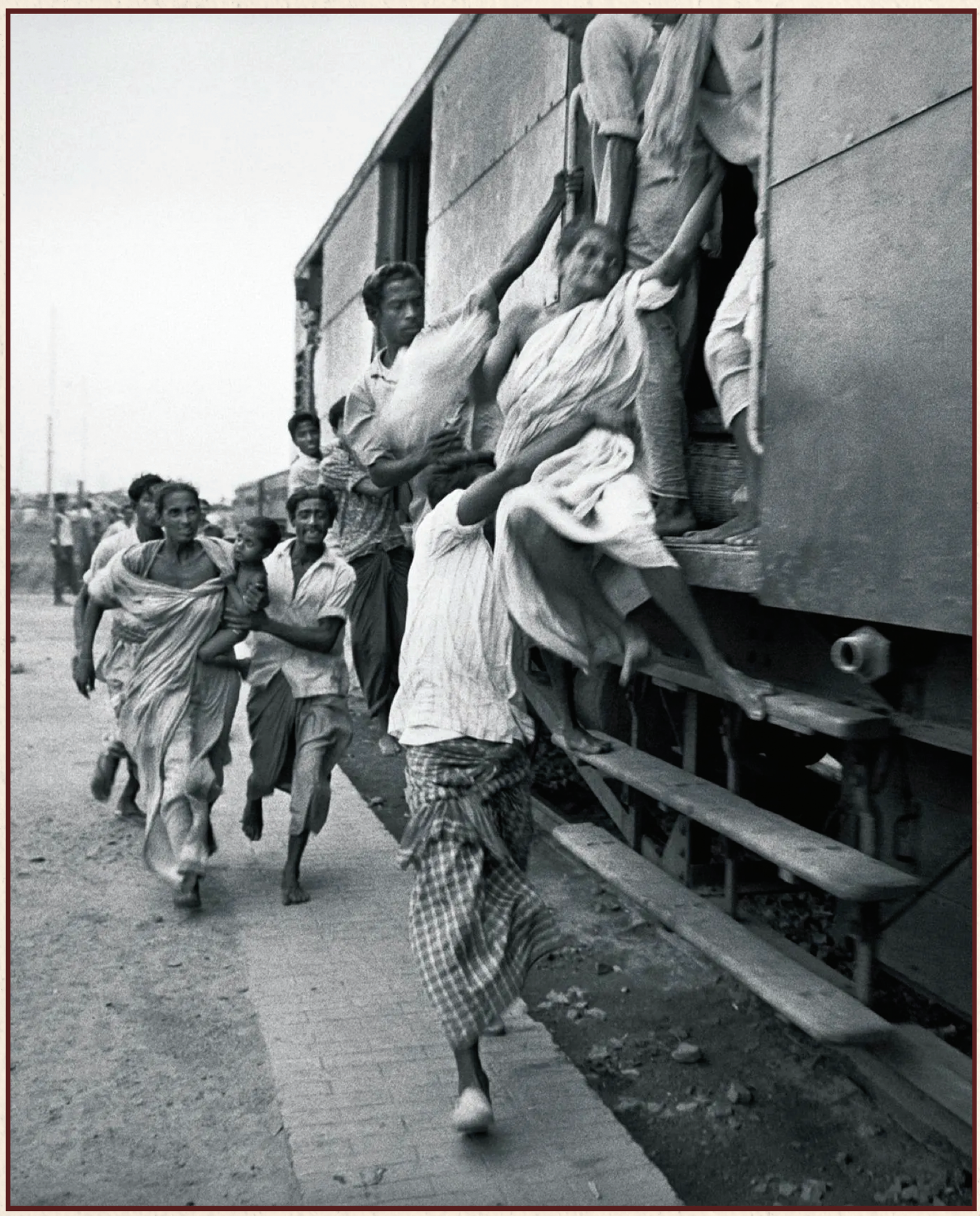
Survival was the Only Destination



In that desperate race to save their lives, neither comfort nor convenience held any meaning—there was only one goal: to somehow reach safety. This scene stood as a stark, living testimony to the fear, insecurity, and despair of those times.

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Testimonies of Unseen Massacres



Ghost Trains – Trains carrying refugees were often targeted, and the passengers aboard were brutally massacred. Such trains, which returned filled only with corpses, came to be known as "Ghost Trains."

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Overloaded but Undeterred



In 1947, India had 115 civilian aircrafts, including 25 Dakota planes. These aircrafts flew far beyond their capacity to help evacuate people, assisting in the migration of nearly 35,000 individuals. Later, they also played a crucial role in delivering relief supplies.

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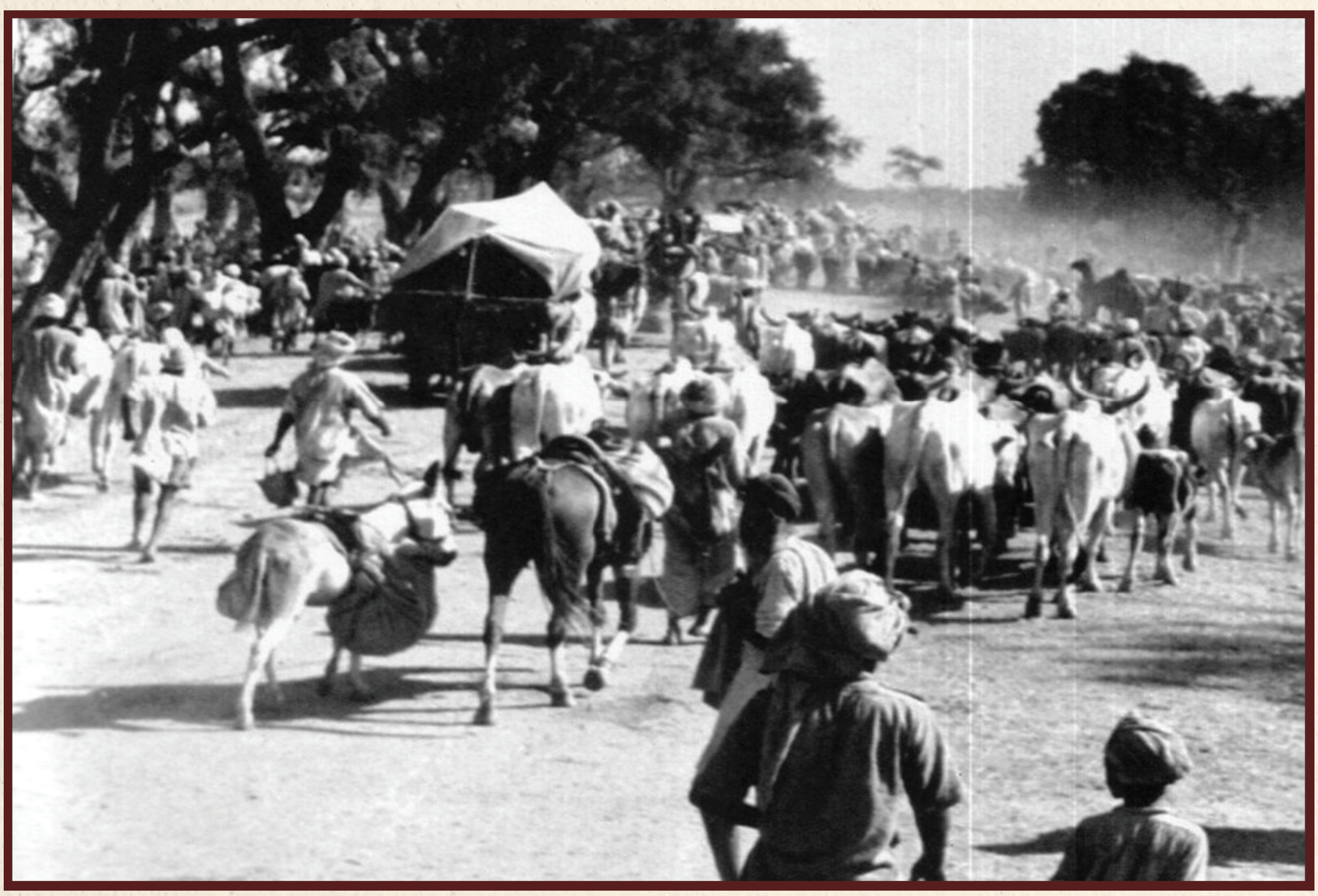
Lifeline in the Skies



During the migration, the Indian Air Force also played a vital role. For instance, in September 1947, aircraft flying over Punjab witnessed a shocking scene — nearly 30,000 refugees were walking on foot over a stretch of about 25 miles (40 kilometers). These planes spotted hostile mobs lying in wait, planning to attack the exhausted refugees. The aircraft immediately relayed their locations to military patrols on the ground.

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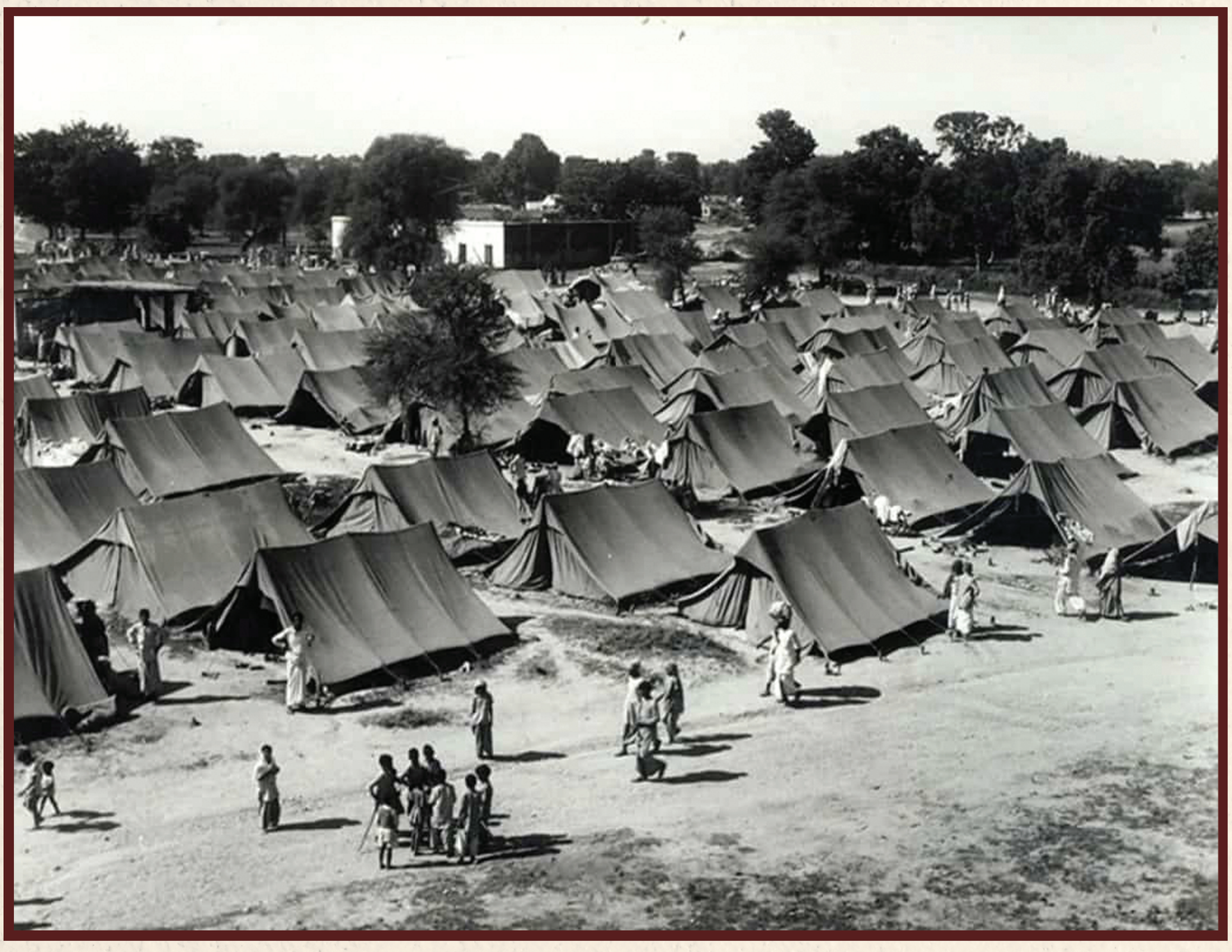
Gathering of the Uprooted



During the Partition, the Kingsway Camp in Delhi sheltered the highest number of people — around 300,000.

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Their hopes, their dreams, their families — and their homeland

