

The Partition of Hatred

Time was as slow as ever, especially as it had been a while since I last saw something that appealed to me. My stomach was only full to the brim a few days ago with the mouth-watering chicken curry that the soldiers fed me at their camp. My paws ached from hours of walking on gravel and dirt in search of food. My insides continued rumbling as I took each step forward.

I'm unsure why I decided to move away from the camp. The campsite had a green and white flag, fluttering along with the strong winds, which I recognised to be that of Pakistan. At least my stomach wouldn't continually crave a juicy and tender chicken. I continued my way forward, keeping up my pace and not being disheartened. The path I walked came to an end, with the shrubs all positioned to one side. There was a bridge, with a welcoming arch, that took me from one side of the mountainside to the green hills. The bridge bestrode the river with the confidence of the young and the competence of the wise. I dragged my exhausted body over the wooden planks, hoping to be able to make my way down the hill and to the streams underneath where I could satisfy my mouth that was as dry as a desert without a year of rain. I gazed stoically at the water, admiring the way it flowed amid this valley. Though the colours of the sky and the trees changed, the waters remained the same. The waters were only ever so different by the sunlight or the dappling effect of the clouds. The intolerable dryness in my mouth and the unquenchable desire for even a drop of the refreshing cold water led me to continually lick all the water inside me. I closed my eyes in satisfaction, but only for a few seconds as all the gnawing pangs of hunger returned tenfold. A party of yolk-yellow ducklings scattered from under my feet, crashing into the water, as I moved away from the edges. My eyes glanced over the rocks opposite me as I heard the chatters of humankind amidst the murmurs of the wind. I ambled my way up the hill, looking at nothing else but the endless, jewel-blue sky. The serrated mountains from the other side of Tithwal bridge loomed in the distance from the hill I stood upon. Just as I continued walking, a chute of snow detached itself and went trundling down one of the mountains. It had slid over the knotted edge and went crashing into the river where the ducklings jumped in. I do hope they are alright!



Tithwal crossing bridge over Kishan Ganga River, Source: Kashmir Radio Chinar

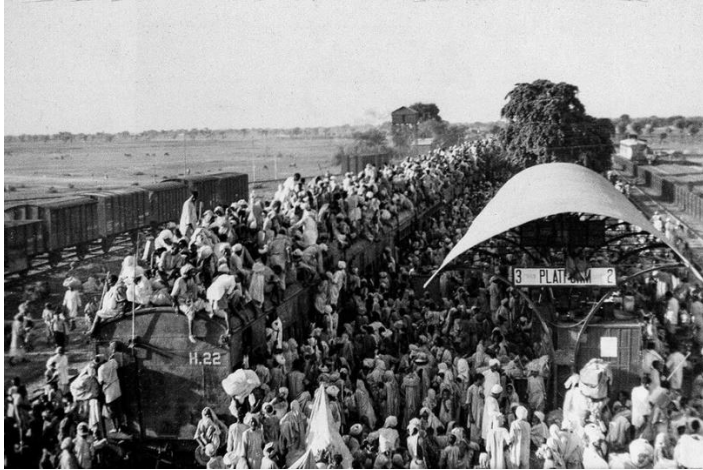
I know how it's like to have no one. I have learnt to fly solo, to fly to new heights and see new views. I've learnt how to walk alone, to carry others, to solve my own problems, as that is what some of us without a place to call home have to do. I returned to my journey to find something that would get rid of the persistent emptiness in the pit of my stomach. My nose immediately began twitching as the aromas of sweet cinnamon, pungent turmeric and smoky cumin overwhelmed the air. The smell of spices and herbs could only mean that I was near food. I shut my eyes and tried to follow the path that the familiar smells came from. As the scent got stronger and clearer, it eventually hit my throat and made my eyes water with a yearning for a luscious meal. From afar, I could see several fabrics draped over poles and nailed to the frosty ground, covering what I could barely make out to be outline of soldiers. For a split-second, my heart leaped with joy as I thought I might be moving towards the Pakistani camp I wandered away from. Soon, I came to realise that the surroundings were much different than that of the Pakistani camp. Although the soldiers all wore very similar Khaki and green camouflage uniforms, some of the soldiers at this camp had various coloured cloths wrapped around the hair on their heads. I steadied my pace and attempted to calm the panic. I recognised the camp was an Indian camp as soon as my eyes identified the orange, white and green flag that was put up. Terror washed over me as I made each step forward. My ears could make out the sounds of high-velocity bullets crashing to stone and falling to the ground. With my heart pounding in my ears, I let out a growl. The soldiers were lying in their positions, bored. I could tell they had been restless as there wasn't major action taking place between the two troops. The sound of my growls attracted an array of soldiers, with some feeding me leftover parathas and chicken. My furry tail wagged as happiness and joy overflowed me, and feelings of love came upon me - the love of the Pakistanis and the Indians towards me. I was certain that nothing could go wrong.

One of the Indian soldiers immediately raised his tone and said, "*Sabhee paakistaaniyon ko glee maar dee jaegee, yahaan tak ki kutte ko bhee*". All the soldiers repeated in synchronisation, "*India zindaabad*". I didn't know what the soldier was saying, but I wanted to run for safety although my paws wouldn't allow me to do so. As a cold wave embalmed me and my mouth ran dry, the same soldier wrote on a small piece of cardboard the words 'Jhun Jhun' and attached it to my makeshift rope collar. I whimpered with my tail between my legs and set off to try and find the Pakistani camp in belief that maybe it would be better there. As the darkness engulfed me, all I could use as a guide was the silvery moon, of which I used to follow the same path I took. The morning broke more suddenly than usual, like someone had switched on a bright light in a dark room. I wagged my tail and ran up to the soldier that fed me at the Pakistani camp days ago. I recollected his name, Bashir. His smile said everything, but the soldier beside him looked at me with disappointment and disgust. The other soldier grabbed me ferociously and undid my collar, only to find the cardboard the Indians tied to it. Giving his moustache a mighty twirl, he turned and said to the other soldiers, "*Jhun Jhun...Shaayad yah ek kod hai. Ahh yah kahata hai ki yah ek bhaarateey kutta bhee hai*". The soldier ordered one of the others to write on another piece of paper, "*Shun Shun...yah ek paakistaanee kutta hai*". They threaded it into my collar, fed me a flavoursome chicken bone and turned me round to face the Indian position, hinting at me to go back to the Indian camp. Unaware of what was happening, but content after receiving a treat, I ran as fast as I could to the Indian camp. Maybe I would get another treat if I obeyed?



Indian soldiers taking position in Kashmir in the Indo-Pakistan War of 1947. Source: Bharat Rakshak.

I could feel the wind against my ears as I bolted to the Indian campsite from the Pakistani hills. It was there that one of the Indians spotted me and immediately picked up a rifle, which he aimed and fired. The bullet hit some rocks beside me, and snow tumbled down. I was shaking in an odd trembling rhythm and immediately froze. A feeling of dread crept up from the pit of my stomach as my mind was clouded with fear. The Indian soldier screamed at the top of his lungs, “*Veer kabhee yuddh se nahin bhaagate. Aage badho aur apana mishan poora karo*”. I tried not to breath, but I knew it was impossible. The Indian soldier then fired again, missing me. The Pakistani soldier also fired at the same time. The bullets passed within inches of my ears. I leapt into the air and my ears were flapping as my stomach churned and eyes closed. It was then that I wanted to be suddenly small and to crawl into someone’s lap. Behind a barbed wire on one side lay India, and, on the other side, behind more barbed wire lay Pakistan. As both sides kept firing towards me like it was a game, a bullet caught me in the leg. I yelped in pain as the hurt within me escalated from a dull throb to a burning pain. As the wave of pain rolled through me, I thought to myself about how both the places I thought had embraced me, cared for me, and showed me what love was, were actually using me.



The chaos that arose, and the struggles the victims had to face, because of the partition of India and Pakistan, as humankind believed that sides must be chosen. Source: Christian Science Monitor.

Translations: Hindi to English

‘Sabhee paakistaaniyon ko golee maar dee jaegee, yahaan tak ki kutte ko bhee’ – All Pakistanis will be shot, even the dog

‘India zindaabad’ – Long Live India

‘Jhun Jhun...Shaayad yah ek kod hai. Ahh yah kahata hai ki yah ek bhaarateey kutta bhee hai.’ – Jhun Jhun...Maybe it’s a code. Ahh it says it’s an Indian dog too

‘Shun Shun...yah ek paakistaanee kutta hai.’ – Shun Shun...this is a Pakistani dog

‘Veer kabhee yuddh se nahin bhaagate. Aage badho aur apana mishan poora karo.’ – Heroes never run away from war. Go ahead and complete your mission

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